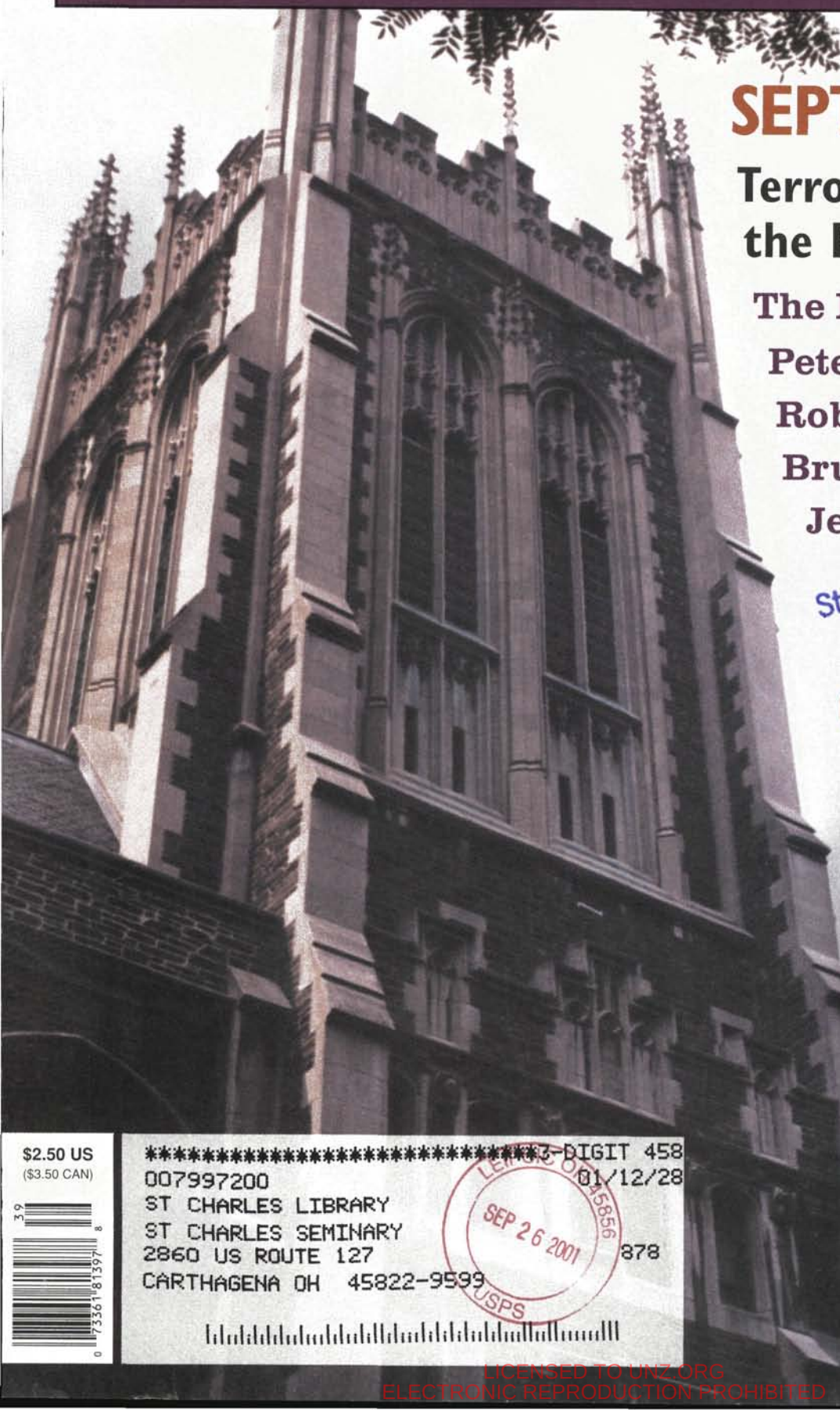
'THE POPES AGAINST THE JEWS'? Marc Saperstein

COMMONWEAL

A Review of Religion, Politics, and Culture

September 28, 2001



SEPTEMBER 11

Terror, 'War' & the Future

The Editors

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Robert White

Bruce Russett

Jean Porter

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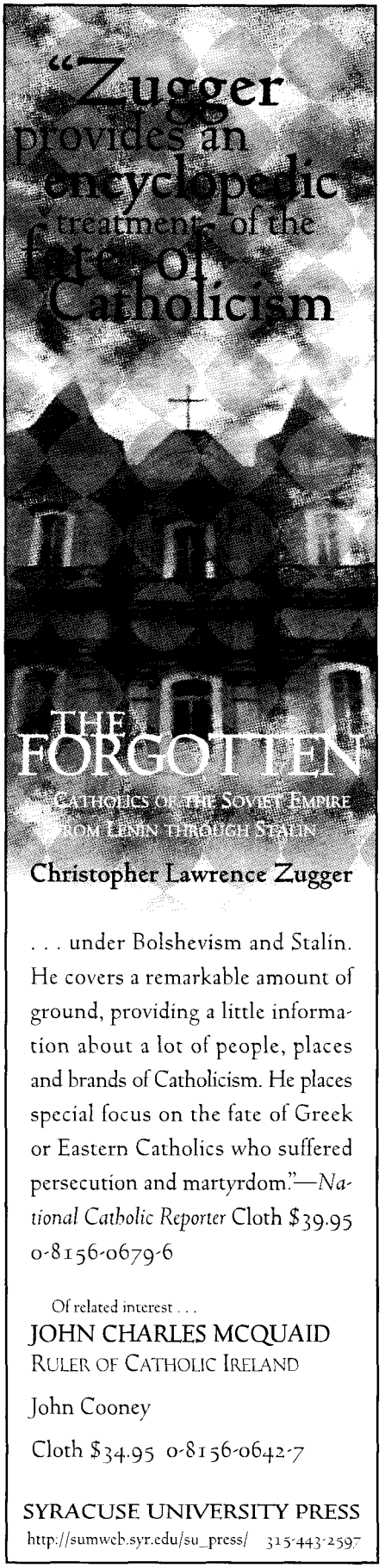
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To the Editors

Fantastic Anna

I just want to say that the article by Anna Nussbaum ("Axioms of Faith," September 14) is fantastic and you should put it up on your Web site, and then let young people know it is there.

BRIAN SCANLAN
Wyckoff, N.J.

From the editors: It will be done.

Priceless gift

I have five library-bound volumes of *Commonweal* for the years 1985–90.

Do you know of any library needing those years? Be glad to donate.

JOHN CALHOUN
New York, N.Y.

Military spending

From your September 14 editorial, "No Voodoo Economics—Yet":

"His priorities, he [President George W. Bush] says [note the sarcasm in "he says"], are spending on the military..."

"He is pressing for money to increase military spending..."

"...to securing the military funds the administration insists [note again the sarcasm] it needs to protect the United States from terrorists and rogue nations."

"Congress will need to steel itself against the administration's single-mindedness on military spending."

"...large increases in military spending led to enormous deficits..."

"If the president...refuses to cut back on increases in military spending...offer him the straitjacket..."

My, what a difference a day makes!

DON LUND
Stoughton, Wisc.

The editors reply:

September 11, 2001 has made a difference, as the opening pages of this issue show. But what kind of difference?

Vice President Dick Cheney's statement on "Meet the Press," Sunday, September 16, that we will need all military systems, including a missile-defense system, simply reinforces our view that Congress will need to scrutinize the Bush administration not only for its appropriation requests but for its battle plans.

Hail, secular ethics

I just read your August 17 editorial on preembryonic stem-cell research ["The Stem-cell Sell"]. I found the tone exaggerated. It illustrates my point about the absolutism of "pro-life" arguments against this research. The questions raised by stem-cell research need balance, insight and respect—not reactive antiabortion rhetoric.

I cannot give much credence to your claim that using a preembryo "the size of a period" for medical research is equivalent to harvesting an unconscious person for his or her organs. Nor can I accept your word that this research will be unproductive.

Your implication that this research may have an "ultimate goal" other than curing illness raises serious concerns about medical technology. Considering our entrancement with technology in all its forms, cloning, "designer children," and "control and standardization of human reproduction" are not inconceivable. For this reason, I wish that you had not addressed this issue in the manner you did.

I guess we'll have to rely upon secular ethicists to wrestle with these questions, while religious spokespersons opt out into hypocritical assertions that "we should not sacrifice the life/dignity of one human...for the benefit of another." This is profoundly true! But where is it being practiced?

CAROLYN TORRANCE
Harrisburg, Pa.

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COMMONWEAL

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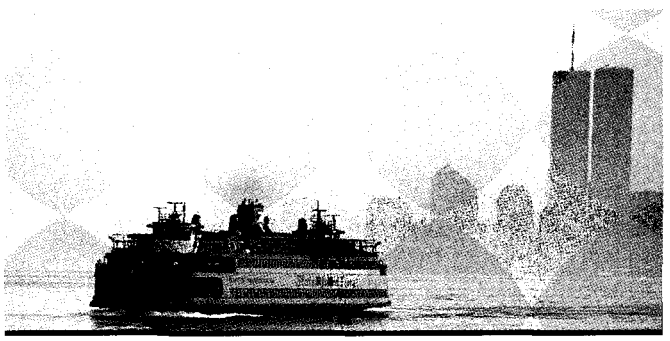

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Commonweal, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly except Christmas/New Year's; and monthly July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 405, New York, NY 10115. Telephone: (212) 662-4200. E-mail: commonweal@msn.com. Web: http://www.commonwealmagazine.org. Toll-free: 888-495-6755. Fax: (212) 662-4183. Display advertising correspondence should be sent to Roth Advertising, Inc., P.O. Box 93, Sea Cliff, NY 11579 (516) 674-8603, classified advertising correspondence to 475 Riverside Dr. POSTMASTER: send address changes to Commonweal, 475 Riverside Dr., Room 405, New York, NY 10115.

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest, and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, OH 44691. *Commonweal* articles are also available at many libraries and research facilities on CD-ROM and in electronic data bases. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional offices. Copyright © 2001 Commonweal Foundation. Single Copy, $2.50. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $44; Canada, $49; foreign, $54. Special two-year rate: U.S. $75; Canada, $81; foreign, $87. Annual rates for air-mail delivery outside U.S.: Western Hemisphere, $84; Europe, $89; other parts of the world, $99. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank.

Illustrations: Cover design: Christopher Young; cover art: George Spelvin; pp. 3, 6, 31, Irma S. Bohórquez-Geisler; p. 3, courtesy United Artists; p. 8, 24, Valery; p. 10, Schwadron; p. 13, George Spelvin; p. 17, courtesy First Run Features; p. 19, courtesy Alfred A. Knopf; p. 22, Baloo, Rothco; Columnist portraits, Elaine Mills.

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September 11, 2001

Millions of words have already been spoken and written about the September 11 terrorist attack on New York City and the Pentagon, an attack that destroyed the 110-story twin towers of the World Trade Center taking the unimaginable toll of more than five thousand innocent lives. What more can usefully be said about the cruelty and fanaticism of the suicide bombers, the horrific pathos of the last minutes of those trapped on the hijacked planes and in the targeted buildings, or the extraordinary dignity and heroism of the survivors and all those who came to their aid? America, and New York City in particular, can be a harsh, acquisitive place. But the response of New Yorkers and the nation as a whole to this terrible tragedy has revealed once again that the surface of modern American life is not the whole of American life, and that the "better angels of our nature" are there if we have the courage to summon them.

President George W. Bush and others have described the bombings as an "act of war." Congress moved swiftly to join the administration in promising a "devastating" military reprisal against those responsible. The nations of Europe and much of the rest of the world have voiced their support for the United States and for the effort to track down and punish the terrorists and their sponsors. Few dispute the right and the justice of fighting a "war" against terrorism, especially a terrorism whose utter disregard of human life suggests it is easily capable of using biological or even nuclear weapons next time.

Whom the United States should punish and how that should be done is much less clear, however. No group has claimed responsibility for the bombings. Early indications are that the terrorists come from many different Middle East countries and cannot be said to be the representatives of any one nation-state. Afghanistan is frequently mentioned as the haven or staging area for Osama bin Laden, the alleged mastermind of the plot. But how a U.S. attack on Afghanistan would either punish bin Laden or significantly disrupt his international network is not readily apparent. Only the most careful deliberation on the part of President Bush and his advisers is likely to result in a plan of action that will bring this confounding new threat to the nation's security under control. A disproportionate show of force that kills innocents yet fails to cripple an elusive enemy will only strengthen the terrorists' hand.

New thinking is needed, but Bush's unsteady performance in the aftermath of the bombings has done little to create greater confidence in his judgment and leadership. Certainly this administration's boastful unilateralism and naive isolationism now stand exposed as folly. The apparent size and complexity of the terrorist plan has also revealed a massive failure in U.S. intelligence gathering and analysis. That failure should not now be compounded by a failure to think through how the U.S. can best defend itself. The moral legitimacy of using military force is not in question; its effective and proportional use is. "The violence to the spirit, the death and the destruction of men, institutions and resources that inflicts and impends over our people and the world makes every attempt at cooler analysis feel like an indignity," the editors of *Com-*

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monweal wrote immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the declaration of war on Japan and Germany. "We must try to distinguish between using the organized energies of the war to build a positive peace from merely dissipating those energies in destroying the symptoms and symbols of the forces fighting against us."

We are sixty years and a world away from that generation-defining crisis, but our moral condition is largely unchanged. However ruthless our enemy may be, our responsibility is still, as *Commonweal*'s editors noted, to respect "the human and Christian precept that man must regard the good or evil of his act and leave the resolution of his life and history to God alone...We are accountable for the means we use." President Bush has not been issued a "blank check" of any sort to combat this great evil. The moral outrage with which we honor the dead and seek to hold the terrorists accountable must be the same measure by which we judge our own actions.

The challenge facing us is daunting, but we are not without guidance. Those who rejected nihilism and stood against evil in the past lead the way. In "September 1, 1939," W.H. Auden's famous poem on the Nazi invasion of Poland, he wrote (most evocatively for New Yorkers today) of sitting "in one of the dives/On Fifty-second Street/Uncertain and afraid" and of how "The unmentionable odor of death/Offends the September night." Auden went on to contemplate the majestic New York skyline, a monument and a symbol of humankind's achievement, an achievement shadowed by human vanity and the mystery of evil:

> Into this neutral air
> Where blind skyscrapers use
> Their full height to proclaim
> The strength of Collective Man,
> Each language pours its vain
> Competitive excuse...

As we have witnessed during these unforgettable days, the strength of collective man is used both to build and to destroy. All monuments to human genius are perishable. But the human spirit, as the response to this monstrous crime has shown, is made of less perishable material than skyscrapers. Auden ended his poem about the nature of evil in the modern world by looking hopefully to "the Just" and offering a prayerful petition:

> May I, composed like them
> Of Eros and of dust,
> Beleaguered by the same
> Negation and despair,
> Show an affirming flame.

This city and this nation have shown an affirming flame to the world during these dreadful September days. It must be kept lit.

EDITORIAL

HOW IT FELT

A report from Manhattan

Like most people, I had no idea as I walked to work September 11 that four planes had been hijacked and one of them had slammed into the north tower of the World Trade Center. When Quanda Williams, *Commonweal*'s administrative assistant, asked me as I passed her desk if I'd heard about the plane that hit the World Trade Center, I dismissed the incident as a tragic accident. Maybe a small plane had clipped one of the towers. That was 9 A.M. As is routine for me, I sat down in front of my computer, opened the *New York Times* Web page, and sipped coffee. The page took longer than usual to load. Something was amiss.

By the time the page loaded, United Flight 175 had already been driven through the south tower. Looking for news, I frantically went from site to site, trying to get video of the events. CNN, no. MSNBC, nothing. Paul Kane, our business manager, suggested the BBC. Bingo. They had live coverage. As the office gathered around the computer screen, the horrors unfolded. "They hit the Pentagon." "The south tower just collapsed." The rumors proliferated. "A third unidentified plane circling New York. They can't find it." All of us in the office stood watching the monitor, the video of the south tower's collapse played again and again. Hands covered mouths. Then the other tower went. At low resolution we saw the building fall.

The phones were useless for much of the day, but as the hours passed more information came. A terrorist attack, for sure. No third plane circling Manhattan. Everything closed: subways, commuter rail, bridges and tunnels, highways. The island went on lockdown. By the end of the workday, almost everyone had left. Staff members who live outside Manhattan had an uncertain journey ahead of them after limited outbound transit resumed. I was nervous about leaving, feeling decidedly agoraphobic.

The walk home, thirteen blocks away, like so much that day, was surreal. I had never heard Broadway so quiet. Downtown traffic was sparse. Pedestrian traffic was diminished. Many people huddled around television sets in restaurants and bars. Several people cried openly, on other people's shoulders, into cupped hands. Everyone was in shock, watching the ground as they walked more slowly than usual. I needed to stop at an ATM, and hated having to do so. The triviality of the act left me feeling cheap and disconnected. Once I reached my block, I ducked into church, slouching into a pew in the back corner. I knelt, tried to pray, but found I couldn't. Four others were present with me. We wept together.

When my cellular phone finally came back up at 8 P.M., I had fifteen voice-mail messages. The first was from a good friend. "Grant, this is Izzy Casaletto. It's like nine [A.M.] or

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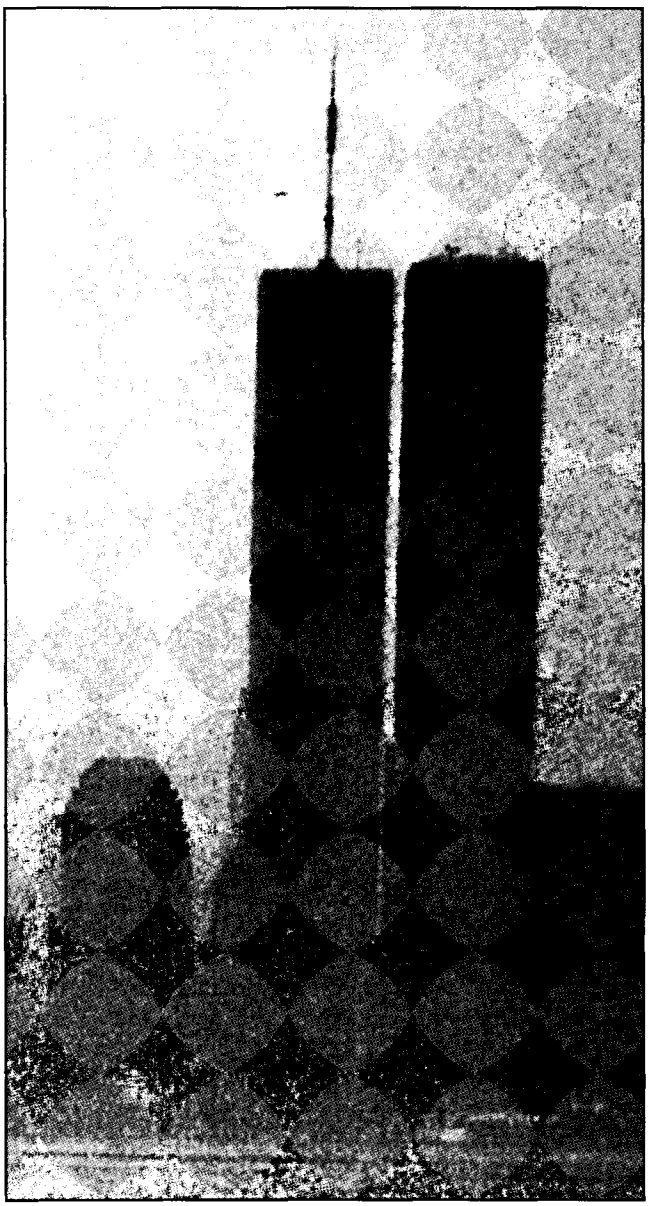
something....I am standing outside the Hoboken [New Jersey] PATH train, looking up at the World Trade Center, and the top twenty floors are belching smoke. This is one of the most bizarre things I've ever seen. Wow. I actually think I can see somebody...I don't know...I don't know what it is...." Izzy boarded a train and rode into the city. When he exited Christopher Street in lower Manhattan, he saw the chaos up close.

"Traffic and people were stopped. Everyone was mesmerized by what they saw. People were hysterical, holding each other up, helping the elderly and children, frantically trying their cell phones." Then he watched the south tower collapse. "I was in shock. I couldn't hear anything around me. Everything seemed to happen in slow motion. In a matter of seconds, I saw a car accident, an old woman hyperventilating, a young woman vomiting, and strangers embracing."



Tasha Rifkin, another friend, watched both towers collapse from New Jersey. Her experience was like Izzy's: "It was as though I watched it happen in slow motion and fast-forward at the same time.... How many people had just died right before my eyes?" After the north tower fell, "the skyline looked blank. There was nothing there but smoke."

Commonweal's production editor Tiina Aleman, who lives in Jersey City directly across the river from the twin towers, reflected on their demise, "Two old friends were murdered in front of my eyes. Along with a visceral sadness I feel regret that I didn't look at or really think of them more often. They were part of the landscape. It's the same regret as when a loved one dies and you feel you didn't have the chance to tell her that you loved her or how much she mattered in your life. Now I better understand why people need to have open-casket wakes."

Since the attack, downtown Manhattan has remained one giant closed casket. On Friday the fourteenth, like a lot of New Yorkers, I felt impelled to go downtown to pay my respects. At Canal Street and the West Side Highway, emergency workers, national guardsmen, camera crews, citizens, and tourists were gathered. Some cheered as the rescue crews passed in ambulances, squad cars, and fire engines. Others stood silently watching the trucks go by, filled with debris, the bent steel visible and still recognizably part of the towers. There were the refrigeration trucks as well. They carried the dead.

On Saturday I returned. Part of the financial district had been opened to pedestrian traffic, accessible by subway only. There were five of us in the subway car as we passed directly under the wreckage. Riding slowly through the well-lit, clean, deserted World Trade Center subway station without stopping caused more than a little uneasiness as we all made eye contact without speaking. When the E train finally stopped at the Broadway-Nassau station, my friend and I weren't so sure we wanted to see the body.

First, there was the smell. The smoke was acrid. All of the rescue workers and many of the pedestrians wore facemasks, but we weren't prepared. Maybe real New Yorkers didn't wear facemasks. After an hour I wished I had one. Next was the dust. Everything was covered in a film, which, up close, looked like paper pulp. The dust had a fibrous quality, almost reflective, a putty tone that colored the scene sepia, like an old movie.

The crowds were small and silent. Then they began to grow, people with cameras and dogs. One Great Dane was outfitted in an American flag; he seemed oblivious to the funeral pyre. Everyone stared at the void. Pointing and whispering, getting as close as the National Guard and the NYPD would allow. As I continued up Ann Street, the sights on the ground were almost as staggering as those in the sky. One young man used his empty film canister to scoop up dust that had settled on a ledge. He saw that I saw him, quickly capped the container, and moved on. A family of four stood outside a fenced-in parking lot, which was strewn with papers from the World Trade Center. Friday's rain had washed much of the dust and papers from the lot, but a shadow, a kind of

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photographic negative, remained—eight and one-half by eleven rectangles of dust. I looked more closely at the family, and saw the father poking a broomstick through the fence. His toddler daughter squatted beneath him, tiny hands thrust through the links, grabbing papers as her father pulled them toward her. Her mother collected them, one hand on a stroller that held a baby who watched this paper gathering intently. Farther down the fence, two tourists had snatched up a memo from the lot. One held it up as the other filmed it; the address caught my eye: One World Trade Center, ninety-second floor.

The walk uptown was long. The subways had shut down again, so hundreds of us filed east and walked quietly up through Chinatown. I stared at my feet for much of the way, the images replaying: the BBC video; the column of smoke where the towers stood; One Liberty Plaza, ready to collapse, its curved contours in stark contrast to the straight lines of buildings beside it. The dust on the tips of my shoes—bits of the World Trade Center and its contents. I couldn't help but imagine the horror I had not witnessed. I couldn't help but think of the firefighters, police, volunteers. How are they doing it? The dust on the tips of their shoes, on their faces, hands, in their eyes and lungs.

What was next? War? What kind? I could not bansish the questions, the images, the need to know what to feel and think, or how to pray when it did not seem that God, Emmanuel, was with us.

GRANT GALLICHO

OF SECULAR MINDS

WILLIAM PFAFF

BEWARE THE JACKALS

Technology is not a sure defense

The first thing that must be said about the attacks in New York and Washington on September 11 is that they demonstrated the vulnerability of the United States, and of any modern society, to an intelligently prepared and determined attack.

Military officials, and the uniformed and civilian analytic agencies attached to the U.S. defense establishment, have for decades formulated speculative scenarios of attack on the nation, but their work has been dominated by the high-technology mindset of the Pentagon and by the engineering ethos of American society. The planning has always suffered from the experts' assumption that an enemy would attack in a manner symmetrical to the defenses they already had in place, or that they planned to have.

Thus, the defense planners concentrated their speculation and planning on the danger of attack by weapons of mass destruction, probably using more or less high-technology methods. The discussion has almost entirely concerned missile attacks, rogue nuclear weapons, and chemical and biological agents. The planners were not interested in rogue commercial aircraft.

The first real lesson—which was not learned—was provided nearly sixty years ago, shortly before the end of World War II, when a U.S. medium bomber, lost in the fog, crashed into the Empire State Building, then the country's highest skyscraper, in New York City. The lesson: Exotic methods and high technology are not necessary to produce devastating results. On September 11 the lesson was validated. You merely need to crash three old-fashioned airliners into vulnerable targets in order to produce mass panic, shut down most of the government, and force the evacuation of the centers of Washington, New York, and other major cities.

A second lesson: The psychological and political consequences of such an event are not measured primarily by the scale of the casualties, but by the unexpectedness and drama of the attack. As long as the attack remains anonymous, fear and panic escalate.

The sought-after effect is to demonstrate the vulnerability of those targeted—and the continuing vulnerability of those who might be targeted the next time. And to show that high-tech defenses, of the kind in which the United States takes pride, can be circumvented by using simple methods. It is to show that no real defense exists against an anonymous attack which makes use of the ordinary functioning of civilian society.

Such an attack is possible so long as commercial airplanes fly, trains run, power systems and public utilities function, people go to work, and business and markets continue to operate. Each can be subverted, or intervened in, or exploited in ways that damage their users and the larger society.

Even a totalitarian security state cannot deal with this, although it suppress basic civil liberties. It is extremely important to understand this, since there will be two natural reactions to what has happened, both of them essentially futile.

First of all there will be continuing calls for revenge against those responsible, presuming that the instigators are eventually identified or identify themselves. The practical uselessness of revenge has been illustrated repeatedly and continues to be shown in the Middle East, since those who employ terrorism are not functioning on a pragmatic scale of reward and punishment. As the Israelis find, making martyrs of your enemies invites further martyrdom.

The second reaction will be that the United States needs even more elaborate defenses than now exist. Certainly the Pentagon, the CIA, the National Security Agency, and the rest of the American apparatus of national security proved incapable of preventing the September 11 attacks. They are incapable of preventing a repetition in some other version. There are no technological defenses,

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as such, against this sort of thing. Surely, if nothing else comes out of Tuesday's attacks, they ought to have demonstrated to Americans the irrelevance of national missile defense.

There are ordinary security measures that can be taken or improved, but the nature of attacks mounted from within the regular functions of society means that no comprehensive or conclusive defense exists. The entire history of terrorism in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has proved this.

The final and most profound lesson of these events is one that it will be hardest for government to accept, and this government in particular: The only real defense against external attack is a serious, continuing, and courageous effort to find political solutions for national and ideological conflicts that involve the United States. The immediate conclusion nearly everyone has drawn about the origin of these attacks is that they come out of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle. It is reasonable to think that this is so, although there is as yet no proof.

For more than thirty years, the United States has refused to make a genuinely impartial effort to find a resolution to that conflict. It has involved itself in the Middle East in a thousand ways but has never accepted a responsibility for dealing impartially with the two sides—locked in their shared agony and their mutual tragedy.

If current speculation about these bombings proves to be true, the United States has now been awarded its share of that Middle Eastern tragedy. □

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WHAT KIND OF 'WAR'?

Four responses

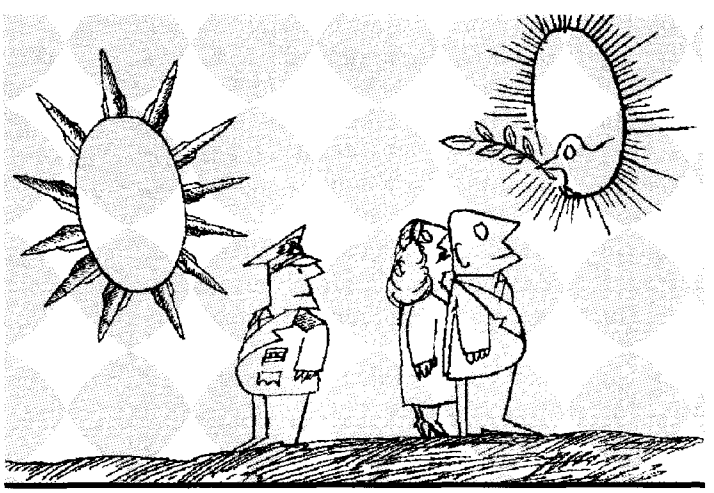
Peter Steinfels

The phone rang. "What do you think we should do? Stay here or leave?" my daughter asked. She was calling from the forty-first floor of an apartment building four blocks from the Word Trade Center minutes after she had seen the second plane fly into its target.

A kind of deathly, phony calm descends at moments like that. Think, think, the mind says while the emotions strain to cut loose. What is known? Unknown? Turn on the TV, field a call, make a call. Now she reports the lights are flickering, now there's talk of gas leaks, now first one, then the other tower collapses. Think, think, the mind says, repressing the terror, pretending there are reasonable categories for processing such unimaginable images. Now she decides to leave—she and her twenty-one-month-old son and a babysitter—and now they can't leave, now they can, and now, while they travel by foot and stroller, I can only wait and ponder the possibilities.

A week later, our grandson is lighting up our apartment; his mother and father (the latter having returned, with great difficulty, from Europe) are camping out in the spare room; and friends trapped in New York or just eager to be together are swelling the crowd at many a meal. But I still feel myself carefully nursing a layer of that phony calm. Is it self-protection against all the heartbreaking stories? In truth, I want to sink into those stories, soak in the grief and the justifiable outrage. But every dip into scripted sentimentality makes me recoil. Every appearance of a Washington official puts me on guard. Colin Powell and Dick Cheney, with their command of detail, do educate the public about complexity. The president is in charge of cheerleading, which he carries out unevenly. Congress is apparently convinced that this is not the time to ask the tough questions. As on September 11, the information is incomplete, the events fast moving, the feelings always on the verge of taking control. Think, think, the mind says.

I am not a pacifist. I have no problem calling the September 11 attacks "acts of war." But when we are said to be at war—but a new, different kind of war—I want to know what that means. Is it like the cold war? The war on drugs? The Soviet Union's war in Afghanistan, Israel's war in the Middle East, Britain's war in Northern Ireland? How is it the same, how different? How will we know when we have won? And weren't we already fighting a war against terrorism? What will be done differently? Why will it succeed? Who will be the victims? How will sacrifices be shared? What do we put on hold in the meantime? Of course, such questions can never be answered fully, but so far I sense that Washington is simply saying "Oh, those are good questions," and then moving ahead without answering them, at least publicly, at all.



Whoever destroyed the World Trade Center took two years or more to mount these attacks. There is surely a lesson in that.

Peter Steinfels *writes the "Beliefs" column for the* New York Times.

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Robert E. White

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon are an assault not only on the United States but on civilization itself. No set of grievances, no matter how deep-seated, can serve to justify these terrible crimes.

The task ahead is to build an international coalition against terrorism. This can only be accomplished by diplomacy. President George W. Bush has reached out to foreign leaders and his call for cooperation has been answered. NATO has invoked Article 5 which states that an armed attack against one member is an attack against all. President Vladimir Putin placed Russia alongside the United States in the war against terrorism. Even the fifty-seven-member Arab League expressed sympathy.

The problem is that until now the Bush administration has done everything it could to signal its disregard for a stable world order by spurning treaties and making national missile defense the centerpiece of our security policy. This phantom defense, which experts believe would cost between $150 and $300 billion, is manifestly useless against terrorism. At a moment when the United States needs wholehearted international cooperation, Star Wars symbolizes the unilateral action which defeats such cooperation. The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington have ensured a new context for the congressional debate and prospects for this program's defeat are improving.

The United States and its major allies must not only destroy terrorist networks. We must take away the oxygen which inspires young people to believe that suicide missions are a passport to heaven. This means working closely with moderate Arab states by addressing the legitimate grievances of communities from which terrorists are drawn. With two-thirds of the Arab population under thirty years of age and with most Arab economies in decline, the Middle East will soon become ungovernable unless the region is stabilized. An end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and the creation of an independent Palestine will not put an end to terrorism, but it is an indispensable start.

The collapse of the Soviet empire deprived the United States of the lodestar that gave coherence and shape to our foreign policy. Since then, in the words of political scientist Michael Mandelbaum, "American foreign policy has the shape of a doughnut—lots of peripheral interests but nothing at the center." And there are challenges we have largely ignored: Common action to save our global environment; an international commitment to curb exploding population growth; multilateral agreement to control and reduce to a minimum nuclear arsenals; an end to the "silent genocide" of third-world famine and plague; a ban on exporting arms to third-world countries; and a commitment to promote economic opportunity in the poorer nations by investing in programs of education, health, and sustainable development.

It is ironic that a terrorist attack against the United States has imposed a multilateral agenda on an administration that has flaunted its unilateralism. It is hard to imagine a more uncomfortable fit. If the Bush administration is to gain the cooperation of the rest of the world, it must create a new international climate. An end to threats to abrogate the anti-ballistic missile treaty, and a new look at the Comprehensive Test Ban, the International Criminal Court, small-arms and germ-warfare agreements would be a good place to start. Our defense against terrorism will only work if we regard the September 11 attack as a signal to begin to work with other nations, not apart from them.

Robert E. White, *a former United States ambassador to El Salvador and Paraguay, is president of the Center for International Policy.*

Bruce Martin Russett

The administration tells us this will last a year or more. They understate. Think decades. One might say that Palestine has become the world: terrorism, retaliation, counter-retaliation, in cycles without end. Think of all the terrorist organizations—not all linked to Islamic groups—who take aim at Western capitalist and individualist culture. Remember that the first Bush administration declined to occupy Iraq ten years ago when it would have been far easier. Think Vietnam. Consider the topography, the local support from all who are poor, angry, and looking for someone to blame. Failure in Afghanistan was perhaps the single biggest cause of the collapse of the Soviet Union. And the Soviets were not soft or faint-hearted.

Our opponents may be evil, but they are not stupid or crazy. They have a strategy to provoke us into an extended struggle that will destroy our values. Democracies do fight well, and win most of their wars. But democratic peoples don't like long, costly wars without a prospect of victory. A massive American military response is probably unavoidable, but neither anger nor determination should blind us to certain implications.

First, we must not descend to indiscriminate destruction. Civilians will die as a result of our military strikes, but we must keep those deaths proportionate to our legitimate security goals and to what we are trying to prevent. The Clinton and first Bush administrations conducted their wars (Kosovo and the Gulf) in a restrained fashion so as to minimize civilian casualties. Not perfectly, but with much more restraint than in Vietnam or in World War II. They were restrained in large part by public sentiments in the United States and our allies. In a long war we will need many allies. Bush seems finally to understand that. Holding together a long-haul alliance including Islamic governments and Islamic peoples will be very, very hard. Military and economic power alone won't do it. Some perception that this country is substantially obeying international law and elementary morality about not deliberately killing innocent people—not sinking to the level of our antagonists—will be essential. The just-war principles require it. So too does prudence—

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the more we violate those principles the more we spawn new terrorists.

Second, we must defend civil liberties. Airport security in this country has been a joke, and can no longer be. More intelligence gathering may include eavesdropping. But we must not lose what we are fighting for, which is in large part our freedom (including freedom from fear of the state).

Third, we must give serious attention to the Arab-Israeli conflict. That's hardly the whole cause of this terrorism, but without a peace of sorts in Palestine there will not be even a peace of sorts in the world.

In short, far more than automatic retaliation is at issue. All of us are capable of evil acts. The situation is one of choice, and the exercise of our free will.

Bruce Martin Russett *is Dean Acheson Professor of International Relations, Yale University.*

Jean Porter

In the wake of the appalling events of September 11, we are united by feelings of outrage, grief, and fear. These reactions are surely appropriate and call for expression. But as we move beyond the shock of the immediate events to consider how we as a nation should respond to them, we have to remember that there are better and worse ways to translate our initial reactions into actions. Some reactions are likely to be effective, others may be immediately satisfying while increasing our vulnerability in the long run. And those of us within the Catholic community should take the lead in reminding the nation of something else: There are some courses of action that we should rule out because they are not morally acceptable. We have been provoked beyond anything we ever expected, but that does not give us license to respond in kind.

I am writing these words on the Saturday morning following the terrorist activities. Yesterday, Friday, the *New York Times* quoted Paul Wolfowitz, the deputy secretary of defense, as saying, "It's not just a matter of capturing people and holding them accountable, but removing the sanctuaries, removing the support systems, ending states who sponsor terrorism." On Saturday, the *Times* reported that during his remarks in a prayer service at Washington's National Cathedral, President George W. Bush proclaimed that we have a responsibility to history to "answer these attacks and rid the world of evil." Perhaps these, and the many similar comments that we have heard from our nation's leadership, are simply hyperbole—understandable responses to a staggering tragedy, not to be taken seriously as enunciations of policy. We had better hope that that is all they are.

Pragmatically, a policy informed by these sentiments would be a disaster. We do not have the power to end terrorism around the world—much less to rid the world of evil. We should have learned that by now. At the moment, our responses seem to be colored by thoughts of World War II. We should be thinking of Vietnam instead.

But my main concern at the moment has to do with the moral implications of such a policy. Like many others, I am troubled by the easy invocation of war, with its misleading implication that we are engaged in hostilities with whole nations, and not with independent groups of terrorists. But if our nation's leaders are going to style this conflict as a war, then we must remember that even within war there are moral constraints on the use of force. The Catholic community has a grave responsibility to take leadership here, because we are custodians of a historic tradition of reflection on the ways in which justice constrains the use of military force. We must remind our country's leaders, and our fellow citizens, that in order to be morally justified, military force must be proportionate. The outright destruction of nation-states can never be a proportionate response, even to severe provocations. The use of force must have a reasonable chance of success. What practical aims would be advanced by attacking countries that do not have the power to stop the terrorists from operating within their borders? And finally, direct attacks on civilians can never be morally justified, and the inevitable risk to civilians in military actions should be minimized. We cannot fight terrorism by becoming terrorists ourselves. Even if we could, such a price for our security would be too high. □

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George Grayson

FOXY CATHOLIC

The church in Mexico

Spain's President José María Aznar greeted the Mexican press corps shortly after 9 A.M. on July 2. He began by extending "triple congratulations" to his host Vicente Fox—on the first anniversary of Fox's electoral victory over the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), on his fifty-ninth birthday, and on his marriage earlier in the morning to Marta Sahagún, his press spokesperson and companion.

News of those nuptials jolted Mexico's Roman Catholic hierarchy because neither Fox nor Sahagún had had previous marriages annulled. Mexico City's Cardinal Archbishop Norberto Rivera Carrera denied that the couple would be excommunicated, but said they could not take the sacraments. Guadalajara's Cardinal Juan Sandoval Iñiguez, the Mexican cleric closest to John Paul II, was more critical. He voiced sadness for the president's "irregular, sinful situation," which set a "bad example" for Mexico's 101 million inhabitants, 85 to 90 percent of whom are Catholic.

A cloud still hangs over Fox-church relations as the reform-minded president prepares to visit the pope in early October, and the controversy affords an opportunity to ask several questions: What is the recent church-state record in Mexico? Who are powerful players in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and what role did they play in Fox's election? How have Fox's ties with the church evolved?

Victors in the 1910–16 Mexican revolution savaged the church for its close association with ousted dictator Porfirio Díaz. In debates leading to the 1917 Constitution, General Francisco Mújica denounced priests as "vampires" and "vultures." He and fellow Jacobins outlawed church involvement in elementary schools, declared marriages to be civil contracts, barred religious publications from commenting on politics, and severely restricted the church's property and legal rights.

Though these prohibitions remained on the books until 1992, a *modus vivendi* with the church followed the bloody 1927–29 Cristero rebellion that pitted the army against Catholic militants in central Mexico. In return for the church's recognition of the revolutionary regime, PRI presidents winked at proscribed religious practices, allowing the church gradually to move back into education, reopen sanctuaries and seminaries, and acquire property through wealthy laymen.

Although the church has failed to obtain its own radio and TV stations, lay organizations have opened at least five television channels to the broadcast of Masses, Bible readings, and other religous programs. The church-state rapprochement also included the unpublicized administration of sacraments to prominent ruling-party politicians and their families. In some ways, the church had the best of both worlds: it staved off legal sanctions while enjoying a much better public image than "corrupt" politicians and the PRI.

Archbishop Jerónimo Prigione, who arrived in Mexico as papal nuncio in 1978, was determined to codify the church's informal advances. The veteran diplomat courted PRI notables, forging such a strong bond with then-President Carlos Salinas that the latter authorized a direct phone line between Los Pinos, the Mexican president's residence, and Prigione's office. The nuncio's cultivation of influential politicians paved the way for the modification of the Constitution's anticlerical provisions and the renewal of diplomatic links between Mexico and the Vatican in 1992.

Even as the adroit Prigione wined and dined top officials, he helped promote a conservative group of bishops. Members of the so-called "Club of Rome" took their cues from the Holy See, ran their dioceses in a top-down fashion, cozied up to Mexico's business elite, and used their contacts to combat the legalization of abortion, gain access to the media, slow Protestant advances, and kibitz on social and economic policy. Prominent in this informal fraternity were Rivera, Sandoval, Bishop Onésimo Cepeda Silva of Ecatepec, and Yucatán's Bishop Emilio Berlié Belaunzarán.

On questions of social activism, the Club of Rome was contemptuous of Mexico's ever-shrinking number of liberation theologians. The Club's nemesis was Samuel Ruiz García, bishop of San Cristóbal de las Casas in Chiapas. Don Samuel had stridently defended indigenous peoples, demanded that they be granted municipal autonomy and broader political rights, deplored the self-serving politicians and affluent landowners who exploited them, and provided an environment congenial to the Zapatista rebels who sparked a short-lived uprising in early 1994.

Before Ruiz retired in 2000, the Vatican placed a bishop coadjutor in his diocese. But much to Rome's dismay, newcomer Raúl Vera López cast his lot with the outspoken Ruiz García. Even though Vera López was transferred to Saltillo, he and Ruiz García continue to champion indigenous rights.

The official Mexican Episcopal Conference (CEM) occupies the middle of the Catholic spectrum. Headed by Bishops Luis Morales Reyes (San Luis Potosí), José Martín Rabago (León), and Abelardo Alvarado (Mexico City), these moderates constitute the biggest bloc among Mexico's ninety-five bishops. As such, they resist being manipulated by the Vatican and demonstrate a keen sense of nationalism. For example, even though Ruiz García was too radical for the tastes of most of the country's bishops, they rallied to his defense when Prigione and his allies attempted to oust him.

Whatever the differences among the bishops, the candidacy of Fox seemed like a godsend. As standard-bearer of the pro-Catholic National Action Party, Fox was a practicing Catholic, who had attended Jesuit schools before entering the Jesuit-run Iberoamerican University in Mexico City. Equally important, Fox publicly attended Mass, lofted the standard of the Virgin of Guadalupe as a campaign banner,

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and adopted the Cristeros' battle cry: "If I advance, follow me. If I hesitate, push me. If I flee, kill me!"

Still, despite Fox's Catholic bona fides, the Club of Rome favored the PRI's presidential candidate Francisco Labastida. It apparently believed that he would win, and Rivera Carrera et al. had become increasingly skilled in navigating the labyrinthine corridors of the seventy-one-year-old political system. Bishop Cepeda Silva, a lawyer and the golf-playing scion of a well-to-do family, became the club's interlocutor with the Labastida camp. According to Guillermo H. Cantú, who wrote a book about the 2000 campaign, Labastida privately promised that, if elected, he would officially recognize seminaries and other religious institutions, bestow a tax deduction on religious organizations, and allow parents to give religious instruction in public schools.

But while the Club of Rome may have preferred the PRI, the CEM was eager for change. It argued that the Mexican church should open itself to greater democracy even as it impelled the country's democratization. After all, the PRI regime and its authoritarian culture had given rise to corruption and widespread poverty.

On May 2, 2000, the CEM crystallized these ideas in "*La democracia no se puede dar sin ti: Elecciones 2000*" ("The 2000 Elections Cannot Yield Democracy without You"). This document urged the faithful to vote for pro-life candidates, who encourage value-oriented, high-quality education and bring a moral perspective to economic policy—with a "special emphasis" on generating employment for everyone. This job description seemed tailor-made for Fox, as did the admonition that a Catholic cannot vote for a politician whose platform offends "moral and ethical principles." Five days later, the hierarchy issued an episcopal letter that reiterated the imperative for Catholics to embrace democracy and reject electoral fraud.

Later in the month, Pope John Paul II canonized twenty-seven Mexicans, all but two of whom died in the Cristero rebellion. This action underlined the animus of the PRI's founders toward the church, which stimulated voter turnout in the hard-fought contest.

The Fox administration hit the ground running, at least as far as the church was concerned. First, Fox took Communion at the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe the morning of his inauguration; and, while he was delivering his first presidential address before ten thousand people and a national television audience, his daughter rushed onto the stage to hand him a crucifix. Second, the new chief executive named conservative Catholics to head both the Department for Women and Children and the Ministry of Labor. The labor secretary wasted no time in declaring the Virgin of Guadalupe "patron" of Mexico's workers, much to the chagrin of anticlerical union leaders. Third, the government significantly boosted allocations to religious groups to undertake social projects.

Such benefits aside, however, elements of the church have taken aim at several Fox programs. Hostile to neoliberal economics, the CEM has questioned the impact on the poor of the plan for ambitious tax reform. Among other things, this bill would extend the unpopular value-added tax (IVA) to food, medicine, books, and school tuition. Even Pope John Paul II has obliquely criticized the IVA measure. Such carping, however, overlooks the fact that the richest one-fifth of the population enjoys 42 percent of the benefits of exempting food and medicine from the IVA.

Vera López, García Ruiz, and other bishops have excoriated the watering-down of Indian Culture and Rights legislation. In its original form, the proposal would have granted autonomy to indigenous communities. Wary of political Balkanization, Congress attenuated the measure so it simply reiterated the equality of all Mexicans, while permitting states to pass laws appropriate to their Indian populations. Fox initially extolled the legislation, then disparaged it, and finally signed it into law in early August.

But his marriage has sparked the biggest rift between the chief executive and the church hierarchy. Many bishops feel betrayed. When seeking votes, Fox portrayed himself as a fervent Catholic, but once in office, he and Sahagún married without obtaining annulments. "Won't average Mexicans conclude that if an ostensibly good Catholic like the president can act in this manner, they can too?" the clerics ask.

In concentrating on Fox, the bishops reveal their fixation on the president-as-prime-mover in Mexican politics. However, reforms in the 1990s have greatly enlarged the power of Congress, which—dominated by the PRI and anticlerical leftists—shows little sympathy for the church's agenda. While chiding the chief executive, the bishops have also overlooked the machinations of his first wife, Lilian de la Concha, who now resides in Rome. There, she has become a devotee of Father Marcial Maciel—the Mexican-born founder and head of the powerful Legionaries of Christ—who introduced her to the pontiff. She took advantage of her ties to Maciel to slow efforts by Sahagún and Fox to obtain annulments, according to church expert Fred Alvarez Palafox.

Church leaders also find themselves at odds with the people over the marriage. Forty-seven percent of respondents interviewed applauded the union, while only 10 percent disapproved (and 39 percent expressed indifference), according to a July poll conducted by the newspaper *Reforma*. Alvarez believes that most priests also approved of the wedding.

Whether the issue is the presidential nuptials, abortion, religious education, Chiapas, or revenue policy, the church elite—with few exceptions—have lost touch with the majority of Mexicans. This is evident on Sunday mornings, when priests deliver homilies to empty pews, while worshipers flock to Protestant churches, especially in the poverty-ridden South. Should John Paul II use the upcoming presidential visit to chastise Fox, the pope will only widen the cleavage between the hierarchy and the Mexican masses. □

George Grayson, *who teaches government at the College of William & Mary, has written* Mexico: The Changing of the Guard, *published by the Foreign Policy Association in New York.*

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ARGUING ABOUT GOD

On planes, in bars & even in the classroom

Grant Gallicho

Sitting in a room with the theologically precocious can be a discomfiting experience. On my left is a slight fellow hunched over Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. He smells of coffee and cigarettes. On my right is a young woman translating Aquinas. I think of the most recent issue of *Entertainment Weekly* in my backpack and blush slightly, briefly consoled by the knowledge that I have a short stack of unread *Commonweal*s waiting for me at home. Most of my fellow students busy themselves shuffling their pens and notebooks, waiting for the professors to arrive. It is the first day of class for some thirty-six of us first-year divinity-school students at the University of Chicago. My notebook and a pen rest in front of me. I, too, shuffle them.

Waiting in that classroom, my mind wanders to two weeks earlier. The memories come quickly, almost as quickly as the inverse observation: Sitting beside the theologically uninitiated can be an unnerving experience too. I am in the middle seat on an airplane and both my chatty neighbors find out I study theology.

"So, wait. Are you going to become a priest?"

"No."

"What's the difference between the King James Bible and the one in church?"

"Stewardess!"

It happens everywhere. I'm at Blockbuster renting *The Big Lebowski*, the Cohen brothers' follow-up to *Fargo*, and I fumble for my card. My college I.D. falls out. The cashier notices: "You go to Fordham?"

"Used to. How much will that be?"

"What was your major?"

"English and theology."

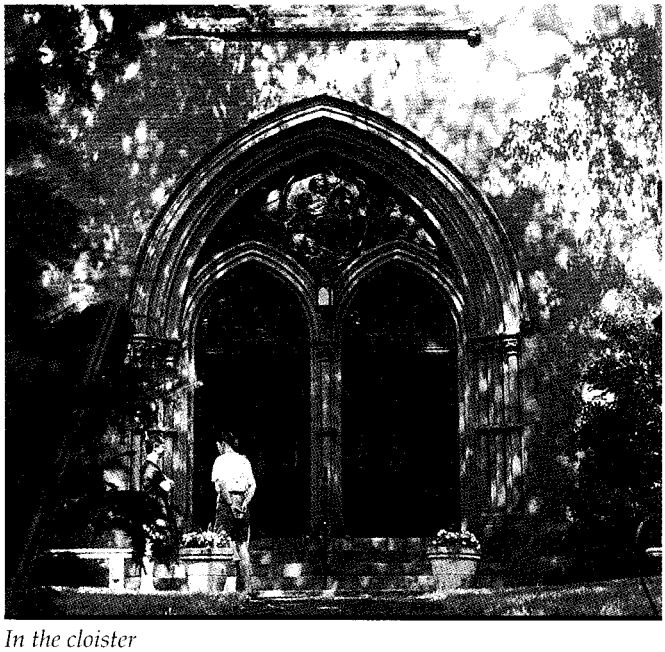
"You gonna be a priest?"

"Stewardess!"

I once had a barroom theological debate, which quickly devolved into a screaming match, about the nature of one woman's understanding of God, whom she described as "something like Santa Claus, but stronger." God is nothing like Santa Claus and probably weaker, I rejoined, and offered a systematic exposition deploying all the right theological jargon. Her face began to contort into a look of disgust. When I had finished my monologue, she asked: "Do you go to church?" I was shaken by her question. To be honest, I was then an irregular churchgoer. I don't have a lot of deeply meaningful moments—where suddenly I feel that my whole self is being called into question—but this was definitely one of them. I hadn't expected to make faith claims at a bar on a Saturday night, and after stammering out a few unintelligible syllables, I realized she had me. Where, she wondered, was my commitment to worship? "Ivory-tower snob," she said flatly. Was this where I was headed?

Is this where I sit now? Between the theologically precocious and the theologically uninitiated? What is this choice I've made, to turn an academic eye to the content of my faith, of others' faith, to do theology? Am I about to become party to what James Cone has called the suffocating embrace of the academy? What am I doing here? Long story.

Here's the short version: When my father was first diagnosed with lung cancer, I was in the sixth grade. I understood very little about the disease, what it could do, and only hazily apprehended why I felt uneasy about the fact that the whole Saint Paul of the Cross junior high would traipse over to the church for a midday Mass said solely for my dad on the day of his surgery. I was heartened, I think, in the way a sixth-grader can be, and I believed the prayers would help. They did, and the operation was a success. Two years later



In the cloister

Grant Gallicho, *assistant editor at* Commonweal, *last wrote about finding religion online ("Got Religion?" August 17).*

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prayers would be needed again. Brain cancer this time, so off we went to church, and another Mass was said for my dad. Again, the operation was successful. My father's health was excellent all through my high-school years, and so it came as a shock when a routine checkup revealed that he had cancer again, now in the other lung, and likely of a different sort. This time there was no Mass said for him. I was a sophomore at Fordham, eight hundred miles away from home, and had to do all the praying myself. The next eight months were easily his worst, and my mother's, and mine. From the clinical psychosis—he lost his mind—that followed his surgery, to the slow withering of his body that put him in a nursing home, I stopped believing in the power of prayer and started wondering about what sort of God would allow a father to forget his son's face. By the time he died I was almost numb. After the funeral, I began taking my theology classes (then my minor) more seriously than my English courses (then my only major). How could I, or anyone, explain this senseless suffering? Where was the loving, all-powerful, all-knowing God of tradition when my dad, deeply immersed in a mafia hallucination, accused me of trying to have him killed?

And so, I rejected the idea of that sort of God. Having first been scandalized by process theology (a way of thinking about God that posits God's authentically temporal and social, truly related, character) that was presented to me, strangely enough, during the year of my father's decline, I didn't come to take it seriously until I entered divinity school. *But…but that changes God (or God changes)*, I used to think, whenever Alfred North Whitehead's theistic conceptions were explained during my time at Fordham. Yes, I came to think, it is a God worthy of worship that I'm after, and what does it mean for God to be omnipotent, omniscient, all good, and unchanging? How can those things be held together without contradiction?

So that's the *why* of it, of my place in this classroom. I'm waiting for the *how* to walk through that door.

The professors are late. The ticking of my watch seems louder than usual. The class is growing restless. Pens tap with more frequency. A creaking door from the left brings all heads around. The teaching assistants (TAs) enter. You can tell they're TAs because they are dressed better than the dean. One breaks north, the other south, and syllabi make their way across the aisles.

"Here you go." The classmate speaks. With a nod and a grin, I take a syllabus and pass the others down the row. The top of the first page reads, "Religion and the Social Sciences." It seems unlikely that there will be any Saturday-night barroom faith claims made in this classroom for the next ten weeks. As my eyes scan the page, my anxiety subsides. It seems surprisingly manageable.

In come the professors.

Post-class processing at the graduate level is something to behold. The deftness with which graduate students can deconstruct a professor is rivaled perhaps only by their ability to pigeonhole each other. This sort of conversation isn't the most pleasant thing I've ever engaged in, but it allows for a much needed release of steam, and its memory sustains me on the walk home to my efficiency apartment—they call it "efficient" as though its size were its virtue.

It is Spartan but adequate accommodation, though it provides little solace from the often brutal but necessary self-examination that occupies so much of a graduate student's early months in a program. Just four walls, a desk, a few chairs, books, papers, computer, and I—alone in a room with myself. No roommate, no classmates down the hall who share this plight. I have met some of my neighbors, and though it may be too early to tell, I don't anticipate attending many Wednesday-night pot-luck dinners in this building. I'll be lucky to get a postbox conversation going once a month.

Having entered graduate school right out of college, I come to realize in these first few weeks that my acclimation may be more social than academic. I come with a habit of study that some of my older classmates are worried they've forgotten. My challenge is to raise that habit to another level. And then there's that pesky question of faith.

…I begin to wonder if some of my classmates have actually met Immanuel Kant.

Divinity school is one of those places that demand a kind of self-examination, often bordering on solipsism, that is both exhaustive and exhausting. Theology asks the big questions, and if you're not up to snuff, it doesn't merely mean that you lack the proper skill set. It means you aren't capable of talking about what you consider to be the most meaningful thing around. Few areas of study so closely intertwine with a sense of self and identity as those encountered in divinity school. Yes, all career choices include a deeply personal and no-less-meaningful self-understanding; but what separates theological study from, say, law school, is that its topic is literally ultimate in character. There is nothing more final, more encompassing, than God.

Of course, not all of my fellow students are asking these questions for the same reason. Some hope to be ordained. Some enter with "purely academic" intentions. Others are intellectual refugees from other disciplines—like the "recovering attorneys"—hoping to infuse their professional work with a boost of ethics or perhaps to jettison their former professions in favor of a new life of the mind.

I am none of these. Having entered as an M.A. student, I am signed on for an academic degree, on track for the Ph.D. I do not pretend that my interest is purely academic, but hope to inform my faith life, however anemic it has become, with more precise ideas about this God I worship, especially with respect to the theodicy question.

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There is no better evidence of this academic setting than the seminar room. In theory, I am not against the exchange of ideas with my classmates. But in practice, the exchange rate isn't great. Just keeping up with the name-dropping gives me a headache. I begin to wonder if some of my classmates have actually met Immanuel Kant. But once the alphas have finished vying for pole position, much of the posturing subsides, and conversations improve greatly. Still, the professors continue to have the most interesting and intelligent things to say—that's what they're paid for. I start looking forward even to my seminars. Autumn passes and I feel more comfortable. Imagining myself in divinity school next year, and the year after, becomes easier.

Although most of my classmates, myself included, often complain about the amount and difficulty of the workload, we are reminded daily, as we walk through the quads, past neogothic cathedrals of the liberal arts, that this is almost purely a life of luxury. We have been given the resources, though some are borrowed, to turn our gaze exclusively to our studies.

By the second term, the divinity school is charged with nervous energy, all fueled by each student's concern about her or his future. Worry about applying to the doctoral program. Worry over who your adviser will be. Worry about how you'll find what you want to study for the next five to seven years—and lay it out with enough specificity to convince the Committee on Degrees that you deserve a shot at a Ph.D. It's no help when a letter arrives from the provost announcing that the tuition policy for twelfth-year doctoral students has changed. (Tuition's up, of course.) And finally, the ultimate anxiety: What's a student to do when the ideas he studies cut to, or more often through, the heart of his faith? After I pressed a professor on a question about Niebuhr's Christology, he asked me simply, "But why does Jesus have to be divine?" As a classmate replied: "But I thought that was the kicker."

Clarifying moments are not unheard of, though, even under winter's veil. Mine came one late afternoon in an unlikely form, a chalkboard diagram by David Tracy, eminent theologian. Tracy was speaking on Luther and his two conceptions of the hidden God. Tracy illustrated his points by writing the more important names on the blackboard: Luther in the center, Simone Weil, Sophocles, Calvin, Dionysius the Areopagite, and others, surrounding each with arrows pointing to and from Luther, each other, and the edge of the blackboard. By the time he had enumerated point seven of five (vintage Tracy), he'd covered the middle section of the blackboard with what looked to be an electrified mothball. Names were crossed through, out, encircled, and finally rendered illegible. Deciphering it was like finding shapes in passing clouds. I think I may have seen Paul Tillich's head somewhere. It was a Rorschach test for the ages. It was my own personal cloud of unknowing.

Professor Tracy hadn't realized how unreadable this chalky maze had become. After a break, he took questions from the class, fully expecting to be able to refer to his diagram. When one student asked about the relation between Luther's "hiddenness one" and "hiddenness two," Tracy stood, gesturing to the blackboard, and froze. "Oh," he said, gazing at the diagram. "That was supposed to be helpful."

And in its own way it was. How oddly appropriate, I thought, that this electrified mothball appear when Ph.D. application worries abound. The diagram offered a lesson: Systematization is helpful, indeed necessary, when attempting theology. When discussing God, fuzziness will not do. But up on that board was a warning. *Don't squeeze too hard.* All of those lines connecting ideas and thinkers, beginnings and endings, conversations and critiques, had obscured the object of the diagram with the very means employed to achieve its purpose. It had clarified to the point of obfuscation. It was helpful to see the epistemological danger it represents, to see finally what must be kept in check, to see shades of James Cone's "suffocating embrace" at work.

I finished my M.A. in June 2000 and postponed beginning the Ph.D. to force myself to resolve some of these tensions. I had been in school for nearly two decades without interruption, and the time had come for me to step into "the real world." I needed something to balance me, to ground me. Mostly, though, I needed to verify that the effort to ground myself, to make sense of my persistent religious attachments in the face of seemingly overwhelming contradictions, was

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The Day of Small Things

opens on my window as it unveiled itself
to a small boy fifty years back leaving his sleep.

This is the solitude so absolute each pear
on the pear tree in the backyard is a tree,

each mockingbird a separate melody
every trill released here, each cloud releasing light

by gradual delays, then spooling it back,
day, night, day in measured syncopation.

Nothing today will need embodiment
in language until I meet a living soul

who will replace those residing among headstones of the grass
thrown open, the squirrel's second coming,

the worm risen again to answer prayers.
This is the world remembered before words,

before the world is taken from the child
and, broken on the wheel of language, he goes on talking.

Peter Cooley

indeed worthwhile. As it turned out, the ivory tower wasn't so high after all, and so my descent, as it were, to editorial work at *Commonweal* was a short one. Having shifted rather abruptly from a life in the academy to a life outside, I found several issues set in relief for me; the most obvious was theology's relation to those who don't have the wherewithal to do theology.

There is much talk these days about so-called public theology, born of an ever-widening gap between the pulpit and the academy. A small battle quietly rages on theology faculties, tenure review boards, and in the wider academic culture: What counts, or should count, as scholarship? This is especially troublesome in theology, because the lines are not so neatly drawn. When considering a junior faculty member for tenure, peers are quite happy to take into account publication in the *Journal of Religion*, *Theological Studies*, and the like, but journals like *Commonweal* and *America* typically don't pass muster. After all, why do we do theology? Is it strictly for ourselves? For others? Is it for believers and nonbelievers alike? We know it's not for the money.

Are we interested in speaking to the wider world beyond the academy? If so, is it time to reconsider the way in which we go about doing theology and "making" theologians? Of course there is a place for technical terminology. Like most specialties, theology has its own vocabulary, and much of it is necessary. Yet, there is a public aspect inherent in theology that has faded, or at least been relegated to the realms of theology that deal with the marginalized (liberation theology) or the poor (social-justice theory). When more public modes of discourse, like the one you're holding in your hands right now, cease counting as real theological work, we need to start asking ourselves honestly: To whom are we speaking? (Try explaining the soteriological danger of Docetism to your pewmate this Sunday and you'll see what I mean.)

Still, when I am engaged in a conversation about religion, or God, or both with people in the pews or in a video store, I know that there is no more public theology than that. Even when a conversation ends with the pronouncement that I am in very serious sin (How can I disagree?), I just can't bring myself to say no to a good argument about God. So my sometimes impatient encounters—from the friendly skies to the not-so-friendly barstool—with the "theologically uninitiated" aren't an entirely accurate reflection of my feelings. In fact, it's oddly inspiring to find people, young and not so young, at bars, malls, even gas stations—my mechanic has described himself to me as "an armchair theologian"—actually interested in talking about God. Our culture often denigrates this sort of questioning, but people still desire it. People are thirsty. People want to talk about God. It's weird, but it's great. Besides, if strangers are going to approach me in public, I'd much rather talk about God with them than, say, their feelings—or mine.

My time in divinity school has not licensed me to lead prayer with any more skill than anyone else, despite what my family now thinks. (I showed them one Thanksgiving: "Dear loving, pure, genderless spirit" just doesn't have the right ring to it.) Yes, it's been something of a love/hate relationship, but my graduate work has not thrust me into a spiritual crisis, either, at least not one that's surfaced. It has, however, provided me with the vocabulary, literal and figurative, to talk about this stuff. How often do we stand through the recitation of the Nicene Creed—a careful systemized theological account if ever there was one—and actually give it much thought? I now have some equipment to do that, and although acquiring such tools largely serves to highlight the need for more study, divinity school has brought me to a closer understanding of what I mean when I use the word *God*.

So if you find yourself sitting next to me on an airplane—you'll know it's me by the way I shield my reading material from view—and you're feeling the urge to strike up a conversation with a stranger, there is one cue you might consider listening for when you're deciding whether or not to engage your neighbor in dialogue, a mildly desperate plea:

"Stewardess!"

But if you do decide to persist, it's unlikely that I'll refuse. I'm a real sucker for God-talk. □

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Rand Richards Cooper

THROUGH KAEL'S EYES

'The Deep End,' 'Ghost World' & 'Fighter'

Pauline Kael, *New Yorker* film critic from 1969 to 1991, died in September at the age of eighty-two. The day of her death I rented *Nashville*, a film she ardently boosted, and imagined her sitting in the theater, as she wrote in 1975, "smiling at the screen in complete happiness." Kael was famously opinionated—her reviews, charged Renata Adler in the *New York Review of Books*, contained "a protracted, obsessional invective"—but fans knew that her judgments issued from a delirious love of movies and movie-watching. "Without playfulness and the pleasure we take from it, art isn't art at all," Kael wrote in her famous 1969 *Harper's* essay, "Trash, Art, and the Movies." Her bad-girl vision of movie reviewing betrayed a mid-century notion that taking forthright pleasure in something was a challenge, while being "false to what we enjoy," either through morals or manners, was a constant temptation—especially for other critics.

Kael confounded high-brow/low-brow distinctions (she loved Bergman and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*) and changed American film criticism by making it much more personal. A movie was not a set of ideas, she insisted, but an experience, something that works on us. She blasted the kind of big Hollywood production, like *A Man for All Seasons* or *Dances with Wolves*, that makes "a genuflection to importance"; anything that smacked of high-minded solemnity—of teaching or preaching—aroused her scorn. "At the movies we want a different kind of truth," she wrote, "something that surprises us."

Here, then, a summer's-end trio of surprises that Kael, I think, would have liked.

The Deep End stars Tilda Swinton as a woman who mistakenly believes her teenage son has committed murder, and Goran Visnjic—Dr. Kovacs from NBC's "ER"—as the handsome blackmailer who thinks likewise. Directors Scott McGehee and David Siegel have given this classic noir setup (Max Ophuls's 1949 adaptation of the same Elizabeth Holding novel, *The Reckless Moment*, starred James Mason) an unlikely setting, amid the austere loveliness of a lakefront in the northern Nevada woods. This is daylight noir, and domestic too: even as Swinton calls her banker in a frantic attempt to raise $50,000, she's sorting laundry, and her frightened meeting with the blackmailer is interrupted by her daughter asking to be driven to ballet class.

The Deep End is full of beautifully composed shots, such as a time-lapse sequence of nightfall overtaking the upper window where Swinton's character sits smoking and worrying. The film is a study in blue: the water of the lake where a body is found; the neon of the bar where the son gets into trouble; a blue Corvette parked where it shouldn't be. It's hard to be this self-consciously lovely without seeming arty, but *The Deep End* pulls it off, thanks in large part to Tilda Swinton's bravura performance—her pinched, bug-eyed face conveys intelligence and a trapped desperation. This smart genre variation draws an immensely sympathetic performance from its star, and converts a sunny day into menace that comes, as it were, out of the blue.

A heroic life

Ghost World polishes another familiar genre, the coming-of-age movie, to a fine gleam of wit. Director Terry Zwigoff made the brilliant 1995 documentary study of the comic artist R. Crumb, and his new film is adapted from a comic-book novel by Daniel Clowes. Zwigoff is interested in how far eccentricity can inhabit the real world. In the case of Crumb, the answer was, barely; but *Ghost World*'s Enid (Thora Birch, who played Kevin Spacey's daughter in *American Beauty*) is no genius, just an alienated seventeen-year-old who's graduating from high school with no clue about what comes next. She and her best friend, Rebecca, spend their days trading deadpan quips and sarcastic put-downs of classmates. In her room Enid has a backlit faux stained-glass panorama of waterfalls and woods, gaudy, like something in a bad restaurant. Zwigoff pegs the precocious adolescent's cult of irony, revealing, behind the retro and kitsch, a fantasy of authenticity, as well as a Holden Caulfield-like fear of the messy compromises of adult life.

Into this mix trips Seymour (Steve Buscemi), a fortyish nerd with one great obsession: record collecting. Seymour sells Enid a blues LP, and when she listens to the plaintive wail of "Devil Got My Woman" and observes Seymour's total absorption in the arcana of records, she begins a worshipful friendship. *Ghost World* confronts a teenager's dream of heroic outsider-

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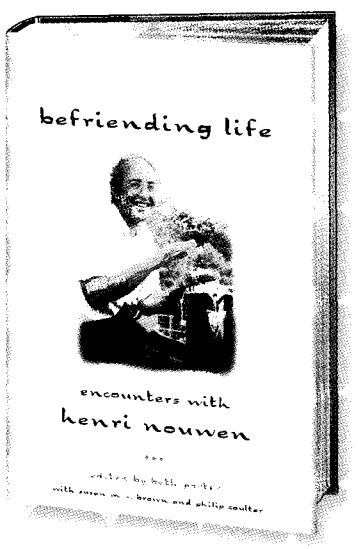
A CELEBRATION
OF THE LIFE
AND WORK OF
HENRI NOUWEN



Bringing together thoughtful, heartfelt remembrances of Henri Nouwen by those who knew him best, this wonderful volume magnificently captures the spirit, compassion, and enduring wisdom of "one of the world's great spiritual writers" (*Christianity Today*).

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dom with the reality of a loner for whom being different is not irony, but isolation. What Enid sees as Seymour's purity is to Seymour himself his tragedy—his habit of collapsing, for instance, into scholarly nattering when a sexy woman in a bar asks what music he likes. "I can't relate to 99 percent of humanity," he says to Enid in despair. "You think it's healthy to obsessively collect things?" And when Enid recommends finding someone who shares his interests, he bursts out: "I don't want to meet someone who shares my interests. I hate my interests!" The movie is worth that line alone.

If you're going to track down just one of these films, perhaps it should be *Fighter*, Amir Bar-Lev's poignant documentary account of two septuagenarian Czech Jews, Jan Wiener and Arnost Lustig, who met in this country as emigres decades ago, and now take a trip back to the scenes of their war-ravaged youth. The film is named for Wiener, a boxer and soldier who escaped Nazi-held Czechoslovakia and joined the RAF. But it could be called *Fighter and Writer*, because Lustig, whose family (like Wiener's) was wiped out in the Holocaust, is a professor and novelist—and the journey is prompted by his interest in writing about Wiener's heroic life.

The trip starts in high spirits, but to our fascination—and surely the filmmakers'—the camaraderie between the two men disintegrates. Things begin to sour in Prague, where Wiener dramatically recounts his postwar return, in British uniform, to the office of an anti-Semitic bureaucrat who had humiliated him, and whom he had fantasized about killing. He describes the man begging for his life, and his own cathartic experience in deciding to spare him. Listening, Lustig decides to blur the picture a bit. "Maybe you made a mistake," he says. "Maybe you should have killed him." After all, the man went on to become a Communist functionary, and probably did a lot of harm, including to Jews. Wiener will have none of this—especially from Lustig, who during the postwar Communist regime in Czechoslovakia was a committed party member, while Wiener himself, falsely accused as a British spy, spent five years in a labor camp. "What did you do while I was in prison?" he bursts out when he and Lustig visit the former police headquarters where he was interrogated.

Fighter has the fascination of Louis Malle's *My Dinner with Andre*, the same tangle of the philosophical and personal, revealed through conversation. Lustig is an intellectual, by habit and training a busy contextualizer, for whom the soldier's black-and-white morality is alien. "Morality is a child of necessity," he says at one point. "If you are hungry, you change your morality." A storyteller, he embroiders and expands, dissolving all sins—including his own—in the mordant fact of human fallenness. His outlook is relativistic and deterministic. "What would have happened to me if I had been born a German boy?" he muses aloud. "How many Jews would I have killed?" Wiener, on the other hand, is idealistic, humorless—and increasingly angry. Some people are good. Others are evil. Why is Lustig trying to change the subject?

In Italy Wiener tracks down relatives of a long-dead man who was kind to him, searching for someone who remembers. No one does. Lustig, meanwhile, speculates about why an Italian fascist prison officer helped a young Czech Jew instead of turning him over to the Germans. Did the man himself perhaps have a son? Perhaps a son who had died in the war? Did Wiener's extreme good looks possibly play a role?

For the writer, this is just thinking aloud, exploring the material of the story. To Wiener, his sacred memories are being defiled. "I don't give a shit for this kind of analysis!" he complains. "It bothers me. I don't want it to be diluted by prattling around with this kind of nonsense!"

Soon afterward, the trip breaks off; "we are simply too different for friendship," Lustig comments. True, but at another level a fascinating, near-mythic battle has been joined—one in which Wiener, the trail of his actual life gone cold even as Lustig rambles on about his story, must face an infuriating truth: yes, the fighter may make history, but in the end it's the writer who owns it. □

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An indictment: half right

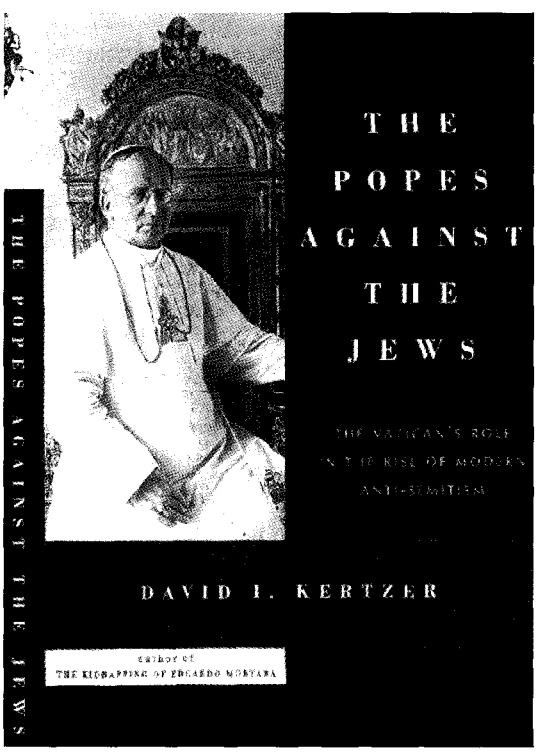
The Popes against the Jews
The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism.
David Kertzer
Alfred A Knopf, $27.95, 355 pp.

Marc Saperstein

Two different though related books coexist uneasily within the covers of this volume by a Brown University historian, author of *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* (1997). The first is a compelling work of scholarship, based largely on David Kertzer's extensive research in the Vatican's own archives, documenting the church's policy toward the Jews in the territories where it held temporal power, and especially in Rome, during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century. In this treatment, the material is presented dispassionately, without editorial comment, allowed to speak for itself. The dismal picture that emerges is indeed depressing, and sometimes infuriating.

Kertzer maintains that with the restoration of the Papal States in 1814 following the defeat of Napoleon's armies, there was an opportunity for a new policy in the exercise of papal power toward the Jews. But Pope Pius VII rejected the appeal of the Austrian government and the advice of his own secretary of state, following instead the conservative majority of the curia and reinstituting the worst aspects of the earlier status of Jews in the papal domain.

These included restoring the mandatory ghettos, particularly oppressive in Rome, where the overcrowded, squalid conditions seemed appalling even to a Vatican commission instructed to investigate. Also restored were the requirements of attendance at conversionary sermons and acts of ritual degradation associated with the Christian Carnival. No schools teaching nonreligious subjects were permitted in the ghetto, and Jewish children were forbidden to attend schools outside its walls, or to engage in professions or skilled occupations. Unlike their medieval predecessors, the nineteenth-century popes declined to issue public repudiations of charges of "ritual murder" by Jews, most notably in the notorious Damascus affair of 1840. The most influential pope of the century, Pius IX, alarmed by the revolutions of 1848, became an inveterate opponent of all modern movements and ideas and, in Kertzer's words, "helped to give the charge of Jewish ritual murder new respectability" by affirming the status of the cult of a "martyred" child and endorsing a French book that defended the blood libel.



Especially oppressive was the Vatican's policy regarding conversion. When it was reported that a Christian midwife secretly baptized a Jewish infant who died a few days later, the body was exhumed from the Jewish cemetery and buried beside the local church. If a Jew expressed a desire to convert, police were sent into the ghetto to bring the other members of his nuclear family to the House of Catechumens against their will, so that the man would not be deprived of his natural right to cohabit with his wife.

Kertzer's claim here, which seems to me to be largely unassailable, is that with occasional minor variations, the Vatican opposed any tendency to ameliorate the legal and social status of the Jews living under its control. The idea that Jews should be entitled to equal rights alongside Christians remained anathema to the church's leadership. In this respect, it was following the medieval tradition, when popes vigorously complained to political rulers who permitted Jews to flourish to the point where their status of subjugation was no longer obvious. But the medieval popes also spoke out forcefully against overt oppression and were viewed by many Jews as their protectors. This aspect of the traditional policy was largely abandoned in the period under review.

The second component of the book is quite different. Polemic in char-

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acter (as can be seen in the title), it marshals evidence and arguments for the claim that the church played an integral role in the emergence and spread of modern anti-Semitism during the last decades of the nineteenth century. This polemic was occasioned by the 1998 Vatican statement, "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah," which distinguished between the old theological "anti-Judaism" and a new, nineteenth-century form of anti-Jewish animus, based on sociological and political rather than religious claims, and defining the Jew in racial terms, a view from which the statement dissociated the church. Kertzer sets out to dismantle, indeed to demolish, this dissociation.

His thesis is that the church perceived the Jews first as the great beneficiaries of the loss of temporal power in the papal states, and then as the agents responsible for this catastrophe. "No longer the frightened denizens of ghettos, Jews, in the eyes of leading churchmen, had now rapidly become insolent and evil masterminds plotting the destruction of the church and all that was holy." As Jewish emancipation produced reactionary movements of malcontents who blamed the Jews for the social and economic dislocations of change, the church found a natural ally in those who wanted to turn the clock back and restore a more traditional ordering of society.

To be sure, the Vatican regularly denied fomenting anti-Semitism, and took care to distance itself from its more vulgar and violent expressions. But it did this by consistently differentiating between "good" and "bad" anti-Semitism, insisting on the right of peoples to defend their national and religious traditions against the threat posed by increasingly dominant "outsiders" sucking the lifeblood of the Christian nations. In this way, "the Vatican began to use anti-Semitism to build mass political support for the church."

Is this case made successfully? Only in part. It is based primarily on material once widely disseminated in Catholic periodicals, especially the prestigious Jesuit biweekly *Civiltà Cattolica* and the Vatican's official daily newspaper, *l'Osservatore Romano*. The material cited at length from these journals, from 1880 to the end of the 1920s, is indeed devastating. Many of these passages—about the perversely dangerous character of Jews and their Talmud-based religion—are indistinguishable from the rhetoric of the leaders of the new anti-Semitic movement. In addition, by reviewing local conditions in France, Austria, and Poland, Kertzer shows that churchmen at various levels were closely associated with local and national anti-Semitic movements. After this book it will be considerably more difficult to defend the sharp demarcation between the church and modern anti-Semitism that the "We Remember" statement maintains.

Yet Kertzer weakens his book by overstating his case. The thirty-six "fiercely anti-Semitic articles" published by *Civiltà Cattolica* between late 1880 and early 1884 did indeed coincide with the crystallization of an anti-Semitic movement in Europe. But the assertion that *Civiltà Cattolica*'s anti-Jewish campaign, coming when it did, "proved crucial to the rise of modern anti-Semitism" goes beyond what the evidence supports. Germany had a significant Catholic minority, yet German anti-Semitism was largely a Protestant phenomenon; there is no evidence that Catholics supported the new movement more than Protestants, despite the Jesuit journal's campaign.

The short chapter titled "Race" is particularly problematic. Its polemical character is obvious from the first sentence: "Efforts to deny Catholic Church involvement in the rise of modern anti-Semitism have made much of the presumed lack of a racial element in whatever hostility the church had directed against the Jews in the past." Kertzer claims that the church was indeed involved in the development of racial thinking about the Jews, pointing to the "purity of blood" legislation, first promulgated in Spanish secular circles and opposed by the church, but eventually applied to positions in the Spanish church and in the Jesuit order.

But this was an anomaly with no discernible influence in the nineteenth century. Recent scholarship on modern racist thought shows how it developed from various sources totally independent of the Spanish legislation. Kertzer claims that the Spanish doctrine "helped prepare Catholics in the late nineteenth century...for further developments in racial thinking," and that the Jesuit rule against members of Jewish ancestry was "often cited by both the Nazis and the Italian Fascists" in justification of their own racial policies, but no evidence is provided for either assertion. Furthermore, Kertzer himself provides many examples of the church's explicit repudiation of the racist element in modern anti-Semitism as a violation of its own teachings. The entire chapter reminds one of the note written by a preacher in the margin of his sermon typescript: "Weak argument, shout like hell!"

Not content to show the links between the church and modern anti-Semitism, Kertzer insists upon continuity with the Holocaust, a connection that both raises the stakes in the arena of public discourse and introduces major problems of historical argumentation. The claims of continuity are made without argumentation or evidence, in nebulous or metaphorical formulations that can neither be proved nor refuted. Thus, "the teachings and actions of the church, including those of the popes themselves, helped make it [the extermination of the Jews] possible." Or, "the physical elimination of the Jews of Europe came at the end of a long road...that the Catholic Church did a great deal to help build."

Missing is any indication of how Kertzer understands historical causality. Many things "helped make [the Holocaust] possible," including World War I and the Treaty of Versailles, a worldwide depression, the charismatic personality and rhetorical power of Hitler, the invention of the machine gun and the technology of gas chambers and crematoria, the steam engine for railroad transportation and IBM cards for keeping efficient records, American isolationism, sophisticated techniques of indoctrination and propaganda. How does one rank the importance of such factors, in comparison with the teachings of the church? Is Kertzer's claim really that the Nazis would never have risen to power in Germany, and never been able to put

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their genocidal program into effect, without the material in his book—No *Civiltà Cattolica*, no Holocaust? Or just that it would have been more difficult? Without a clear test for the importance of the contribution claimed for the church and its leaders, these assertions become little more than innuendo.

The Holocaust frequently overshadows the material presented. Kertzer cites a statement about Jews published by *l'Osservatore Romano* in 1892: "The people's ire [against the Jews' "rapacious tyranny"], although at the moment somewhat dampened by sentiments of Christian charity and by the tender influence of the Catholic clergy, may at any moment erupt like a volcano and strike like a thunderbolt." This suggestion that lethal outbursts of anti-Jewish violence are caused by Jewish behavior is shocking enough in its own context. But Kertzer continues, "It was a warning that, read in the light of what would happen in Europe a half-century later, is chilling"—as if the death camps of 1942 were an eruption of "the people's ire" rather than instruments of mass murder efficiently orchestrated by a modern bureaucratic state. The final section of the book is titled "On the Eve of the Holocaust," the last chapter, "Antechamber to the Holocaust." Such evaluation of events in light of what would happen in the future is a fallacy that most historians warn their undergraduate students against.

Were it not for the polemical undercurrent, the broad and unsubstantiated incendiary claims, the tendency to judge every statement by church officials in the worst possible light (including Pope Pius XI's "We are all spiritually Semites" statement), and to present all Jewish teachings in an overly apologetic manner, this illumination of Vatican policy toward and discourse about the Jews in the nineteenth century might well have led to a conscientious rethinking of the church's position on its relationship to modern anti-Semitism. The sensationalist elements will undoubtedly sell many more copies and gain extensive media coverage, but—if one might venture a guess about reader response—it will probably engender a defensive reaction that will divert attention from the book's actual achievement.

If there is any basis for optimism in the heart-wrenching, mortifying material presented in this book—and this is nowhere even hinted at by the author—it is in dramatizing the enormous transformation in the church's relationship with the Jewish people over the past two generations. Compared not just with the Middle Ages but with the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the documents produced by the contemporary church and the moving symbolic acts of reconciliation by the current pope provide encouraging evidence for the capacity of visionary human beings to transform even strongly conservative institutions. The historical record documented by Kertzer makes these recent developments seem even more extraordinary. □

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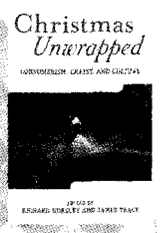

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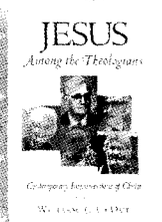

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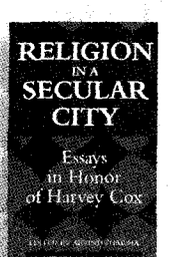

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HE DIDN'T ADD UP

Bertrand Russell
The Ghost of Madness, 1921–70
Ray Monk
The Free Press, $40, 574 pp.

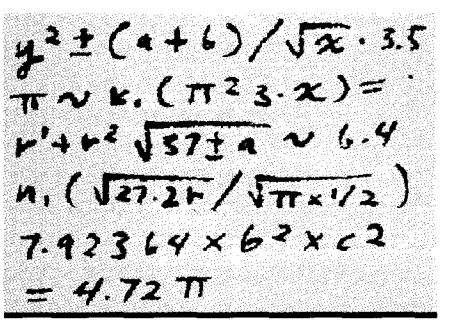
Dennis O'Brien

When he died in 1970, Bertrand Russell would probably have been regarded as one of the most influential philosophers and significant public figures of the twentieth century. The earlier volume of Ray Monk's masterly biography, *Bertrand Russell: The Spirit of Solitude, 1872–1921* (1996) covers the period when Russell was an "influential philosopher"; the second volume (reviewed here) concerns Russell as a "significant public figure." The two periods in Russell's life are sharply distinguished: He produced almost nothing which was philosophically "influential" after 1921. The fact that he appeared a towering philosophical presence by the end of World War I was the basis of his emergence as a "significant public figure" later in his very long life. The publication of the Monk biography is an occasion for evaluating Russell as philosopher and public figure.

Russell's monumental philosophical work (co-authored with Alfred North Whitehead) was the *Principia Mathematica,* published in three massive volumes, 1910–13. Russell and Whitehead aimed to derive the truths of mathematics from formulas of pure logic. *Principia* is an extraordinary technical accomplishment which suffers from two significant defects. In the first place, almost no one has ever read it. The work consists of page after page after page of algebraic notations. It is not until page eighty-six of volume II that one gets a proof that 1 + 1 = 2. Russell quipped that three Polish logicians and three Texas philosophers were the only persons who ever read the whole thing. Second, the subsequent work of Ludwig Wittgenstein and later Kurt Gödel has convinced philosophers that the basic project of the *Principia* cannot be achieved. Logic is not the only avenue to truth.

The *Principia* project did suggest the need for precise logical formulation of the truth conditions of sentences—something that became a consuming interest of logical positivism and some species of "analytic" philosophy. Russell deserves credit for pressing the need to analyze ordinary statements, though almost no one accepts the bedrock analysis, which he proposed. "The cat is on the mat" is analyzed into something like "I am having *cat-ish* and *mat-ish* sensations" and *cat-ish* sensations are further reduced to sense data reports so fleeting that Russell said that one had to speak very quickly to catch the referent. English-speaking philosophy of today is dominated by "ordinary language" philosophy, thus abandoning Russell's reductive analyses. In short, Russell's time as an "influential" philosopher seems to have passed.

What about his status as a "significant public figure"? At the height of the Cuban missile crisis, Russell fired off telegrams to Kennedy and Khrushchev. To Kennedy: "Your action desperate. Threat to human survival. No conceivable justification." To Khrushchev he was more conciliatory. "I appeal to you not to be provoked by the unjustifiable action of the United States in Cuba. The world will support caution." As it happened, Khrushchev chose to make a



major public statement in the form of a reply to Russell's message. All of a sudden this octogenarian philosopher seemed to emerge as a world statesman. Russell would later claim—with characteristic modesty—to have been crucial to the avoidance of a nuclear war.

There is no question that Russell had standing in the public domain by virtue of his reputation as a philosopher. He was more than willing to use his philosophic fame to further political causes. He vigorously protested Britain's entry into World War I, even enduring a brief jail term for his support of conscientious objectors. As a declared socialist he traveled with a delegation of the Labour Party to the Soviet Union in 1920 where he met Lenin and Trotsky. He came away a determined opponent of communism because of the repression of freedom that he perceived even at that early date. From the 1920s to the end of his life he published voluminously on issues of morals and politics in everything from the scholarly press to the *Reader's Digest.* Repeated lecture tours of the United States, which were a financial mainstay, were devoted almost exclusively to social issues.

Having noted intensive and extensive activity, one has to say that Russell's contributions to political or moral thought are minimal. No serious moral philosopher is likely to spend time with any of his writings on the subject. On political issues he was from time to time on the side of the angels—his advocacy of peace—but he missed the threat of Hitler and did not come to support the British war effort until some six months after the outbreak of hostilities. In the last two decades of his life a residual anti-Americanism, exacerbated by a sensational court case in 1940 when he was denied a teaching position at CCNY because of his "immoral" philosophy, he became virtually paranoid. In November 1965 Russell wrote:

> In every part of the world the source of war and suffering lies at the door of U.S. imperialism. Wherever there is hunger, wherever there is exploitative tyranny, wherever people are tortured and the masses left to rot under the weight of dis-

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ease and starvation, the force that holds down the people stems from Washington.

Despite the general rejection of his basic philosophical work and the flimsiness of his moral and political opinions, there is no doubt that Russell was a thinker of genius. How so? One might cite the case of Zeno as a precursor. Zeno presented profound paradoxes: the runner will never get to the finish line of the race because he always has at least half the distance to go, then half of that half, half that half and so on, so that there is always half the distance yet to be traversed. The reasoning is impeccable; the conclusion is obviously wrong. Zeno's argument is a paradox, against the *doxa* (common-sense truth). Russell's philosophical work presented extraordinarily compelling rational analyses for conclusions that were paradoxical—that is no mean feat. Paradoxes of genius compel genius to solve them and this is what Russell's student, Wittgenstein, accomplished in his famous *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* published in 1922. (Ray Monk has also written a brilliant biography of Wittgenstein, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, 1990). Wittgenstein's refutation was clear to Russell by 1913 and it left him desolate and suicidal. He never recovered faith in his philosophical abilities. His turn to moral and political issues was in part the result of his sense that his technical philosophical project was a failure.

It would seem a purposeless and even cruel task to recount in some five hundred pages the cranks and crotchets of a great mind, but there is the personal Russell to be chronicled. Bertrand Russell ended his life as Earl Russell, a title he inherited when his older brother, Frank, died in 1940. The Russells were one of the oldest and most distinguished families in the realm. After the early death of both his mother and father, Bertrand ("Bertie") was raised at Pembroke Lodge, the home of his grandfather Lord John Russell who had been prime minister in 1846–52. Monk speculates that in his latter-day dealings with Khrushchev and a raft of world leaders, Bertie fancied himself as prime minister without portfolio.

Life at Lord Russell's was dismal for young Bertie and his brother. The household was much given to sighing about the sad fate of the youths thrust into their care. Frank rebelled, Bertie discovered mathematics. There was a world where Truth could be demonstrated in sharp contrast to the pious platitudes of Pembroke Lodge. At age eleven he was given a copy of Euclid. "I had never imagined that there was anything so delicious in the world...[It was] as dazzling as first love."

If mathematics was Bertie's first love, in a sense it became the template for all his other loves and a clue to the multiple disasters of his personal life. Russell was married four times. In between and alongside there were numerous liaisons and minor affairs. With the exception of the marriage of his old age, his other marriages ended in emotional debacles for the wives and children. There were two children from his second marriage: John, upon whom Russell placed great hope of continuing the Russell tradition, who descended into schizophrenia; and Kate, who became a Christian, which might have seemed to Russell its own species of walking madness had she had the courage to tell him of her conversion. (Russell opined that Whitehead's one-time interest in the Catholic Church was "scarcely sane.") Conrad, the child of his third marriage, was estranged from his father, visiting him for the first time only a year before the philosopher's death.

Is there a link and key between Russell's philosophic and personal lives? Monk notes that in the last decade of his life a phrase that occurs repeatedly in interviews and articles by the great man is, "It is quite simple." For example, when asked why he had abandoned the Labour Party: "Oh, because they are a gang of murderers. It is quite simple." Three volumes of close equations to show that 1 + 1 = 2 may not seem "simple" but it is in the sense of reducing the complex realm of mathematics to a minimum set of logical axioms. Russell dreamt of going beyond the number 2 to shoes and ships and sealing wax and cabbages and kings: reduce the whole mess of things to simple sense data in

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logically proper form. For Russell the urge to "simplicity" was "religious." He was enchanted by Spinoza's vision of the great unification of *Deus sive Natura*, a deductive system based in a singular ultimate reality. His great love and confidant, Lady Ottoline Morrell, was much annoyed by his interminable harangue about rational religion à la Russell. Religious herself, Lady Ottoline preferred the messy immediacy of emotional life to the arid reaches of a mathematical rationality. She writes in her diary, "His intellect is so immense, but *en l'air*: not in rapport with the things of this sensual life." William James wrote to Russell in 1908, "Say goodbye to mathematical logic if you wish to preserve your relations with concrete realities." Russell commented to a friend, "I would much rather, of the two, preserve my relations with symbolic logic." His personal life suggests that he persevered in that wish—alas for the "concrete realities" of wives and children.

Russell's philosophic reaction to James's moral and pragmatic injunction offers a final lesson. Russell's exalted notion of truth was, he said, "as stern and pitiless as God." He ironically cited the pope as someone who also holds to exalted truth—though of course the pontiff had it all wrong. The issue for Russellian scientists and papal catechists is to avoid the temptation of simplifying the intricate, entangled world of concrete realities in the interest of a simplistic and thus stern and pitiless Beyond. A contemporary philosopher, Nancy Cartwright, writes powerfully against the Russellian kind of scientific simplification in favor of what she calls "the dappled world"—a phrase deliberately taken from Gerard Manley Hopkins (*The Dappled World*, 1999). Her concern is ultimately moral. Those who seek to simplify physical and emotional reality make a mess of the multiple multilayered nonreducible realities of human life. Bertrand Russell's life is a proof text of that assertion. □

Dennis O'Brien *is president emeritus of the University of Rochester and the author of* The Idea of a Catholic University *(forthcoming from the University of Chicago Press).*

WHAT COUNTS AS A PERSON?

The Future of the Disabled in Liberal Society
An Ethical Analysis
Hans S. Reinders
University of Notre Dame Press, $17, 296 pp.

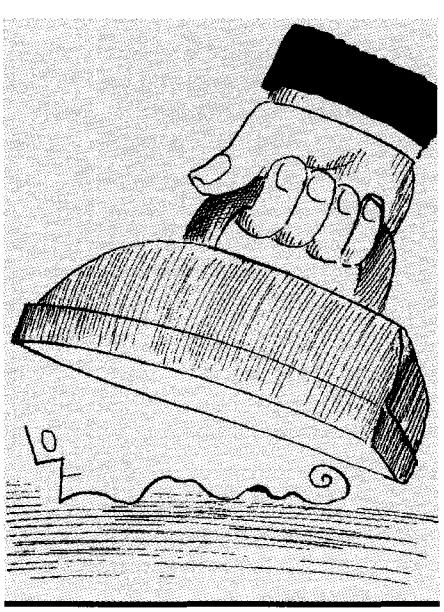
Jean Bethke Elshtain

This book is a sophisticated and welcome contribution to what the author calls "the continuing debate concerning the strengths and weaknesses of liberal morality that dominates contemporary society." Its thesis: Despite recent public-policy efforts to ensure equal opportunity and access for all, liberal society cannot sustain equal regard for persons with disabilities. This is especially true if the disabilities in question are "mental." The liberal presupposition which privileges "choice" as the primary category in public life and apogee of human aspiration, together with modern technologies of reproductive and genetic engineering, dictate that it would be far better if human persons who are, by definition, incapable of choosing on the liberal model were not to appear among us.

So strong is the prejudice in this direction that we simply assume that hypothetical unborn children with cognitive disabilities would, if they could, choose not to be born. Liberal society, under the dominant Rawlsian model, holds that persons with mental handicaps should be given "access" and should not be discriminated against unjustly. But the fact that such human beings have rights if they live in our midst does nothing to mitigate the cultural norms that measure progress by how successful we have been at lowering the incidence of births of the disabled.

Hans S. Reinders, professor of ethics and mental disability at the Vrije University in Amsterdam, cites one of America's leading bioethicists, Tristam Engelhardt: "Not all humans are self-conscious, rational, and able to conceive of the possibility of blaming and praising. Fetuses, infants, the profoundly mentally retarded, and the hopelessly comatose provide examples of *human non-persons. They are members of the human species but do not in and of themselves have standing in the secular moral community*" (emphasis mine). Because they lack such standing, the barriers to eliminating persons with disabilities begin to wither away. There are now no barriers to their elimination prebirth: that is our current policy. If we go the direction of Holland and approve physician-assisted (or medicalized) euthanasia, such human nonpersons could be removed from among us after birth.

To be sure, as Reinders points out, Engelhardt and others observe that, although secular morality "does not grant disabled people moral standing per se, this does not necessarily mean they are deprived of it." Given the religious derivation of so much of our ethical thinking, barriers to simply killing persons with disabilities remain. But such bar-



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riers, Reinders argues, are under continuous pressure of "secular morality" and are likely to be bulldozed out of the way by the potent machine of biotechnology backed up by medical authority. Will our hands really be stayed over the long haul? If we continue in our current direction, it seems unlikely.

Reinders argues that "people with mental disability and their families have reasons to be worried about their future in liberal society. The rapid proliferation of genetic testing may have discriminatory effects...because it brings the birth of disabled children within the focus of 'reproductive choice,' which makes their parents answerable to the charge of 'irresponsible behavior.'" The mother of a Down syndrome child, responding to a column I had written, expressed her deep foreboding on this very theme. She worried about how society will assist persons with disabilities and their families if parents who choose to bring a child with Down syndrome into the world are labeled irresponsible and therefore wholly culpable. This is not the stuff of science fiction. It is the very texture of our ethical lives at this moment. All the forces of popular culture push in the direction of trying to eliminate suffering (given our assumptions about what constitutes suffering), to make life easeful and untroublesome.

What about accepting life as a gift? What about acknowledging our finitude? Wouldn't we be a more compassionate, decent, and just society if we moved in this direction? This requires that the religious sources of the moral life be given more ample public scope. The triumph of "choice" and "self-determination," Reinders concludes, "makes us blind to other dimensions of our existence, such as our lack of control, our vulnerability, and our dependence on other people. For this very reason, it also makes accepting disabled people as human beings in their own right...a difficult task indeed."

The upshot is that liberal democracy is not in a very strong position to sustain solidarity with persons with disabilities and their families. We have turned to certain liberal values—equal opportunity, antidiscrimination—to help eliminate barriers so that the disabled can participate. But, at the same time, liberal values push toward what Reinders calls "prevention" undertaken in the assumption that "reproductive choice" cannot be questioned. Over time our capacity to recognize, to welcome, to support, and to care for human persons whose lives seem to us entirely pointless and burdensome will collapse. Reinders makes a real contribution not only to debates in bioethics understood narrowly but to our ongoing exploration of the many ways in which liberal society undermines moral intuitions and capacities that do not mesh with the triumph of that paragon, the sovereign chooser. This is a sobering book. □

Jean Bethke Elshtain *is the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Professor of Social and Political Ethics, The University of Chicago. Her most recent book,* Who Are We? Critical Reflections, Hopeful Possibilities *(Eerdmans), was awarded the Best Academic Book 2000 by the American Theological Booksellers Association.*

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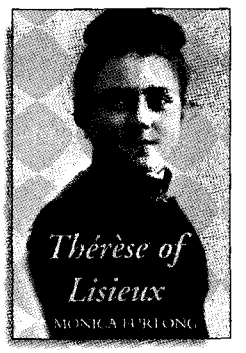

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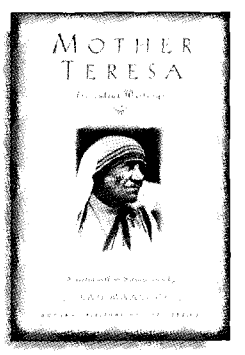

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RELIGION BOOKNOTES

Lawrence S. Cunningham

Yushi Nomura is a Japanese artist and theologian who was introduced to the wisdom of the desert monks by the late Henri Nouwen while studying at Yale Divinity School on a World Council of Churches fellowship. Inspired by the course Nouwen taught, Nomura selected a series of desert "sayings" and illustrated them with Japanese ink brush drawings. The resulting book, originally published in 1982, has been reproduced by Orbis with Nouwen's original introduction and new epilogue based on Nouwen's course notes.

The sayings collected by Nomura make up only a small part of what has come down to us. The best overall desert collections remain Benedicta Ward's (Cistercian Publications, o.p.) and Thomas Merton's (Norton), both titled *The Wisdom of the Desert*. While Nomura's selections will be familiar to readers of those anthologies, what are new and striking are Nomura's pictures. I was so taken by his illustrations, I spent more time on them than on the sayings themselves.

Desert Wisdom: Sayings from the Desert Fathers
Translation and art by Yushi Nomura
Orbis, $15, 122 pp.

Especially intriguing is the economy with which Nomura turns a few brush strokes into a fully realized figure. I even took to counting those strokes by which a monk (always depicted in Zen robes), a flower, a broom, or a mountain come to life. Such economy, of course, testifies to the tremendous discipline of the Japanese calligrapher, whose very art is considered contemplative. The illustrations are a fine match for the sayings, which are also spare and designed to make a deeply meditative point.

In the sayings of the desert fathers, Thomas Merton saw an analogue of the world of the Zen *mondo* and *koan*. His original intention, when he made his collection, was to have the eminent Buddhist D. T. Suzuki write the introduction. Alas, the unecumenical spirit of the 1950s made that impossible. Nomura, by contrast, grasps the connection easily. The result is a handsome volume which well repays quiet attention. It is a book worth having and giving as a gift to a prayerful friend.

The Councils of the Church: A Short History
Norman Tanner
Crossroad, $22.95, 132 pp.

Every theologian is indebted to British Jesuit Norman Tanner because of his superb editorial work on the two-volume *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Georgetown, 1991). These volumes, which print the texts of the councils in their original languages along with facing English translations, should be in the library of every serious theological reader. Tanner's current book can be read as a vade mecum to those volumes because, as the subtitle indicates, it supplies a historical overview of all the major councils, from Nicaea in the early fourth century to Vatican II.

Catholics tend to count twenty-one councils as ecumenical. But, citing Yves Congar, who raised the issue a generation ago, Tanner cautions against calling all of those, especially the medieval ones, fully ecumenical. (The Christian Orthodox East accepts only the first eight as truly ecumenical.) Tanner cites a letter Paul VI wrote in 1974 to Cardinal Willebrands in which the pope calls some of the medieval councils "general councils of the West" rather than ecumenical. Scholars have not been slow to see ecumenical implications, both with respect to Orthodoxy and the churches of the Reformation, in that papal language.

Tanner divides his history of the councils into three large groupings: the early councils; the medieval ones (the five councils held at the Lateran in Rome); the modern councils, which would embrace Trent and the two Vatican councils. In describing them, Tanner sets the context in which they were convoked and, in passing, describes and defines the nomenclature used in conciliar deliberations. The volume concludes with a brief bibliography and an adequate index. *The Councils of the Church* is written for beginners, but even for seasoned church historians it is a good reminder about the crucial role councils have played. Given Tanner's fine style, his command of the conciliar tradition, and the importance of councils both as history and as potential instruments for future church reform and ecumenical activity, this volume is a must read.

Western Monasticism: A History of the Monastic Movement in the Latin Church
Peter King
Cistercian Publications, $24.95, 482 pp.

Some years ago in this column I reviewed Karl Frank's *Of Greater Liberty* (Cistercian Publications), which was advertised as a history of monasticism but which was, in truth, a more general study of religious life (the so-called *vita regularis*—"life under a rule"). Its topics included not only monks but canons, mendicants, and other groups. It was a good but, of necessity, somewhat sketchy survey. Peter King's book, by contrast, indicates a more precise focus: a history of monasticism in the Latin West. He does not consider the development of the monastic life in the Christian East, a topic deserving a volume in its own right.

King's book begins with the early desert tradition and moves quickly to the penetration of ascetic ideals in the West. He does justice not only to the Benedictine thread of monastic observance but also to the Celtic tradition which had its own ethos. The Middle Ages presents a complex picture if only because, deriving from the reforming impulses of Gregory VII (himself a monk), various experiments developed. It is in this age, from the late eleventh century on, that we get not only the vast network of Cluniac houses, Cistercian reforms, and attempts to combine the eremetic and cenobitic life (for example, the Camaldolese and the Carthusians), but also dual monastic houses of men and women, as well as various other religious orders which had their

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moment in history. King continues his story in the period after the Reformation (he also discusses Lutheran and other reformed attempts to keep alive a quasi-monastic ideal) and brings his narrative into the twentieth century.

This is, of course, a complex story replete with names, places, and various institutions. In the midst of these factual recitations are narratives of great interest. King has an excellent chapter on monastic women in the High Middle Ages. We learn of the attempt to keep alive the monastic life in tandem with the missionary ideal, first exemplified by the early medieval monks and renewed in modern times. Regarding that latter task, he touches on the expansion of monasticism in Africa. I was disappointed that he did not discuss the inculturated attempts to develop monasticism in India by such adventurous persons as Bede Griffiths and Henri LeSaux. King also treats the tension in the early modern period between the monastic life devoted to scholarship (for example, the Maurists) and other forms of monasticism centered on penance and contemplation. King gives a brisk account of monasticism in relation to Jansenism and has a fine chronicle of the romantic impulses that led Dom Gueranger to found Solesmes in the nineteenth century after buying an abbey with his own funds. He is also quite fair in his consideration of the impact of German Benedictines on the development of American church life in general and the Benedictine presence in particular.

King tells us that his research was done in Scotland with the books available to him, so keen students of the monastic life will be disappointed by his somewhat pedestrian bibliography. The book does have a decent index. Those interested in this crucial strand of the Catholic experience will find the book a valuable addition to their personal libraries while teachers may find it useful as a resource for their classes in church history. King is a clear writer who has managed to put a vast amount of material into one volume. A well-published scholar on matters monastic, he directs his survey with a sure hand.

Gordon Mursell, a British theologian who has written widely on the history

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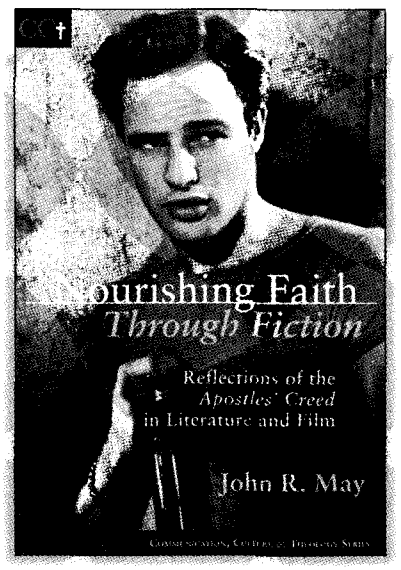

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The Story of Christian Spirituality
Edited by Gordon Mursell
Fortress, $35, 384 pp.

of spirituality, is the general editor of *The Story of Christian Spirituality*. He has chosen nine other contributors, mainly from the U.K., among them the excellent hagiographer David Farmer. After an introduction on Jesus and the origins of Christian spirituality, ten chapters trace the story of Christian spirituality, in both its Western and Eastern manifestations, from the patristic period to the twentieth century.

The most striking feature of this book is its beautiful layout. It is almost a coffee-table book—with boxed features of important persons, lavish color illustrations, helpful timelines, concise highlights of a given period, and nice biographies of individuals for each particular tradition. Sergei Hackel, to cite one example, has an illuminating chapter on "The Russian Spirit." In fourteen pages, Hackel takes us from the conversion of Russia in the late tenth century down to the beginnings of the twentieth century. He highlights some of the great spiritual masters of the time, and provides a powerful page on the Russian icon with particular attention to Andrei Rublev's mystical classic, *The Old Testament Trinity*. Given the page constraints of the volume, he cannot take the story into the twentieth century to describe the great coterie of Russian writers connected to the Saint Sergius seminary in Paris. Nor does the twentieth-century chapter (which sprawls all over the place from great figures of our time to lightweights like Matthew Fox) resume the story. Such omissions, to be sure, are sadly inevitable in a volume which seeks completeness but cannot reach it.

The good news about this book is that it is attractive. One can learn much by simply turning the pages, admiring the illustrations, and perusing the quite readable, albeit brief, résumés of the various movements and persons. Readers will gain much pleasure, as I did, from simply browsing. A reader might then be tempted to turn to other works to supplement what is available here.

The bad news is that someone wishing to follow up on a particular author would get almost no help from the very inadequate section titled "Further Reading." For example, after the seventh chapter on "Catholic Saints and Reformers," we are sent to two authors who have written slim, and not very authoritative, books on Teresa of Ávila and John of the Cross. The list fails to note that both saints are well served by excellent translations of their own works with fine introductions. The bibliography too is a mixed bag of sources, with many works not cited in the best or most recent editions. Let this complaint not be seen as pedantic academic carping. There are so many excellent resources for the study of spirituality, it is a shame that such a handsome volume fails to draw attention to them. Let me end, however, on a more upbeat note: the volume does have a very good index, always a boon at a time when indixes tend to get short shrift.

Scripture in the Tradition
Henri de Lubac
Crossroad/Herder & Herder, $29.95, 244 pp.

Henri de Lubac was aghast when, in 1968, he saw a book of his appearing in English under the title *The Sources of Revelation*. He had been a forceful opponent of those who thought that revelation comes from two sources, Scripture and Tradition—a view repudiated at Vatican II only a few years before. That book has now been reissued by Crossroad in the Herder & Herder series "Milestones in Catholic Theology" under the title *Scripture in the Tradition*, which more accurately reflects the French original. It is a curious volume in that it cobbles together chapters of books that de Lubac had previously published. The author intended this short book to make accessible his thinking on the spiritual exegesis of the Scriptures, which he laid out in formidable detail in his four-volume history of medieval exegesis (now, thankfully, being translated into English) and in his excellent study of Origen's exegesis. The introduction to *Scripture in the Tradition* recommends that we read this précis of his much larger project slowly, because de Lubac, with his unparalleled com-

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mand of the sources, provides much to ponder.

De Lubac never intended that the Christian world turn its back on historical-critical approaches to Scripture. What he did very much intend to demonstrate was that the Christian tradition, as Saint Paul forcefully shows, has always read Scripture as a whole and as a living unfolding of the purpose of God. To the believing community that listens and seeks to understand it, the Word of God provides nourishment and reveals the Living God. The term "Word of God" has both a plain sense and one which suggests the constant encounter of the community and the Word. As de Lubac understands it, the word "tradition" is not a mere historical record, but the continuing acceptance and retrieval of the Word of God. In other words, for de Lubac Scripture and Tradition come together "to form one thing and move as to one goal" as Vatican II puts it (*Dei verbum*).

Scripture in the Tradition contains three long chapters which treat, in order, the spiritual understanding of Scripture, the dual testaments, and the Christian newness. The book has an excellent introduction by Peter Casarella, who provides not only a historical account of how the book came to be, but also a context for the current debates between those who favor the primacy of the historical-critical method of Scripture study and those who feel that a too exclusive reliance on that method runs the risk of turning Scripture into a mere historical artifact. With a sensitive understanding of this debate, Casarella, following de Lubac, warns against excesses on both sides.

If there is one solid achievement of historical-critical research, as John Meier has vigorously demonstrated, it is to emphasize Jesus within the world of Second Temple Judaism. This emphasis is crucial for Jewish-Christian dialogue. Therefore, it is encouraging that when de Lubac, in the second and third sections of this volume, discusses the dual testaments and the Christian "newness" there is no sense of supersessionism, no argument that Judaism has been "replaced" by Christian revelation. He knows that what God has revealed to Israel is part of the seamless whole which is God's

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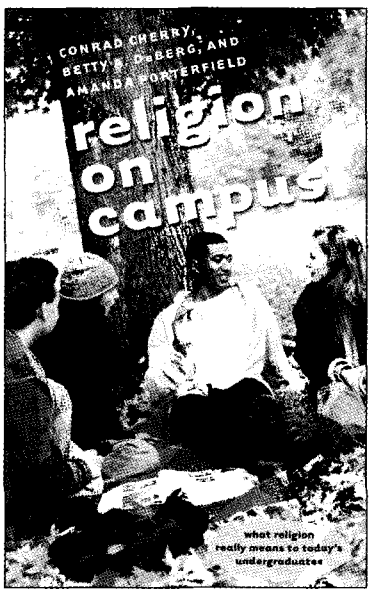
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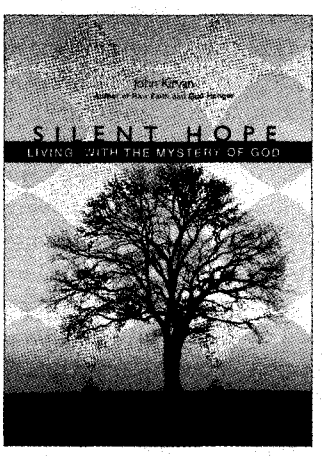

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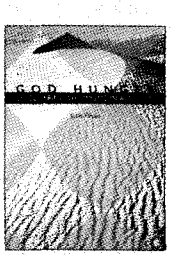

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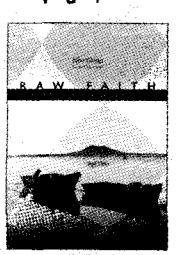

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Word. It is the same Word, de Lubac writes, "brought forth by the Virgin who had been brought forth by the prophets long ago."

Thich Nhat Hanh: Essential Writings
Edited by Sister Annabel Laity
Orbis, $15, 163 pp.

Nhat Hanh (Thich is a title for Vietnamese Buddhist monks) is, after the Dalai Lama, the best-known Buddhist monk in the West. In exile from his native Vietnam for more than thirty years, he now lives in France. He left Vietnam because of his involvement in antiwar activities in the 1960s but is still unwelcome by the current Vietnamese regime. I first became aware of him in 1966 through his friendship with Thomas Merton. In the last few years of his life, Merton used Nhat Hanh's poetry as subject matter for some monastic conferences which he gave on Sunday afternoons to the community at Gethsemani.

This volume excerpts readable selections from Nhat Hanh's more than twenty books. Readers may best know his work *Living Buddha/Living Christ* (1995) which gives a sympathetic portrait of Jesus from a Buddhist perspective. Nhat Hanh keeps an image of Jesus next to the Buddha on the altar in his hermitage in France where, in a place called Plum Village, he maintains a meditation center.

The essence of Nhat Hanh's teaching is to encourage the practice of mindfulness, awareness, or keeping the present moment (he uses all these terms) as a way of cultivating a life of peace and the quintessential Buddhist virtue of compassion. To cite one example: he insists that when we eat we should eat with an awareness of where food comes from, who gleaned it, who prepares it, and for what reason it is consumed. To exercise such awareness is to expand our conscious sense of the links which bind us to the earth, to others, and to needs. When faced with disagreement or harm from others or threats of violence a certain mindfulness helps us overcome anger in order to find peace. (The early desert ascetics in Christianity thought anger to be one of the worst of the "deadly" sins.)

Nhat Hanh's writing is deceptively simple. His constant thesis is that a meditative approach to quotidian life is found not only in the meditation hall—although he thinks such practice a good one—but in an alertness, a being awake in the ordinary course of life. His deep conviction is that such awareness is a path to greater amity and authentic inner peace.

The monk's teaching rests on his Buddhist acceptance of a metaphysics (I hesitate to use the word "theology") that is, in my estimation, incommensurable with Christian ideas. There is a profound gulf between the Buddhist doctrine of the "no-self" (*anatta*) and biblical notions of each human being made in the image and likeness of God. Similarly, the Christian doctrine of creation is very unlike the Buddhist concept of the rise and maintenance of the phenomenal world. Nor is Christian salvation simply equivalent to the Buddhist concept of liberation.

I note the caveats above not because these ideas are prominent in the anthology of texts in this volume but only as a salutary alert for those who think that one can transpose easily the worldview of another tradition into one's own. That being said, however, there are elements in Nhat Hanh's reflections which help us to deepen some elements in the Christian spiritual tradition. In terms of technique, Hanh's notion of mindfulness leading to compassion is similar to the Christian tradition of living in the presence of God emphasized by Lawrence of the Resurrection, De Caussade's "sacrament of the present moment," and Thérèse of Lisieux's practice of doing the ordinary in an extraordinary fashion. In fact, the more generic practice of reflecting on the unfolding of one's day is a contemplative exercise that goes all the way back to the desert tradition of monasticism. How enriched grace before meals would be, for example, if one not only spoke of gratitude but called to mind where food comes from and how it got to our table. Within such reflection one can find the faintest link between contemplation and action.

I read this volume mainly to be better acquainted with a person Thomas Merton admired. I found myself, in the end, admiring Hanh also. There are certain books in which one finds a ring of authenticity. This is one of them. □

Lawrence S. Cunningham *is the John A. O'Brien Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

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WTC

Patrick Jordan

The World Trade Center was constructed during the Vietnam War. I remember watching it rise, the bare light bulbs of the construction crews swinging in the breeze at night. A steam fitter who worked there told me he would never be caught up there once the buildings were finished: the towers swayed too much in the wind.

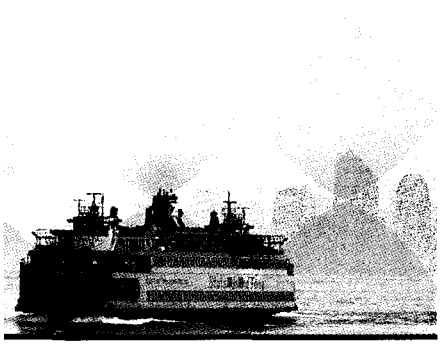
Later, for a period, I worked as a messenger in Manhattan and would shoot up the towers in their huge pneumatic elevators, so large they seemed to carry a squadron of people at one time. In 1985, another *Commonweal* editor, Karen Sue Smith, and I interviewed Governor Mario Cuomo in his office above the eightieth floor. The view from there was spectacular, the governor's energy bristling and electric, and his sense of pride, particularly in the large reproduction of Holbein's *Thomas More* on the wall, immense.

For eleven years (1986-97), *Commonweal*'s office on Dutch Street lay nestled beneath the shadow of the WTC. We could see the two towers through the conference-room skylight, installed by editor Peter Steinfels. After the first attempt to destroy the WTC in 1993, our publisher, Edward Skillin, commuting through the WTC from New Jersey, had to devise a new route, swinging north and then arcing south on a subway. He was eighty-nine at the time. For the past five years, I have tunneled beneath the WTC on my way to *Commonweal*'s new 120th Street office.

For twenty-four years, I have begun my morning commute to Manhattan aboard the Staten Island Ferry. I have taken the measure of each new dawn by seeing how it stacked up against the two towers. Some days they would be shrouded in clouds; others, bathed in the brilliant orange sun rising out of Brooklyn. Sometimes they ascended out of the harbor's low creeping fog, as if the fog itself were breathless at their height and unable to keep up with them. Now they are gone, dust to dust.

It has been an effort to begin to make sense of it all. The nation's defense shield clearly proved porous and tardy, a poor recommendation for faith in a missile-defense shield. Apparently, all the antiterrorist experts are able to agree on is a need for more money. Some of the news coverage has been superb, and the photographs searing. Nevertheless, they were reportorial in nature, and even the close-ups seemed "at a distance," unable to make up for seeing with one's own eyes just how things stood. The mayor and the governor, who became towers before our eyes, concentrated on action, response, and inspiration—rather than explanation.

We at *Commonweal* watched the evolving horror on our computer screens. In this new small world, we got the news about our city from the BBC. We waited in fear and frustration, hoping to hear from spouses, children, and fellow staff members who might have been in the area—all accounted for finally, thank God. Then came the necessary thoughts of the morrow, of the rest of one's life, and finally, of how to get home. For me, that proved a three-hour journey by subway, bus, and on foot, through some parts of the city that were to me a foreign landscape. At one point, I found myself walking down a long stretch of Atlantic Avenue in the Muslim quarter of Brooklyn. The smell of smoke from the twin towers hung in the air, and the streets were almost deserted—except for a large contingent of police, summoned by the far-sighted mayor's order to protect the Muslim residents. Finally, on a somber, packed bus, we inched over the Verrazano Bridge to Staten Island. It was from there I saw with my own eyes the smoldering remains of what that morning had been the WTC, now a black hole punctured in the tip of Manhattan. A massive gray column of smoke rose from the area, as if from a Homeric funeral pyre, a Vesuvius on the Hudson.



Into the future

My son Justin, twenty-four, works at Seventeenth Street and Broadway. That night he said that when the second tower collapsed, his sense of hope disappeared with it. What kind of people would do such a thing? he asked. He had always known the city of his birth as the New York of the twin towers. His world, his mental geography, will henceforth be demarcated at 9/11/01, as will all of ours. We and our nation must rebuild hope and meaning.

When I finally got home, my ninety-three-year-old mother asked in bewilderment and agitation why that Palestinian woman on the television had been dancing for joy? I had no convincing answer. But days later, at Mass on the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, I finally remembered one of Jesus' startling warnings: Do not fear those who can kill the body but only those who can kill the soul. Whatever our response to September 11, let it be just and worthy, ethically ordered, and tempered by the knowledge of our own sins. In the end, may we prove worthy of our humanity, of God's gift of our very soul. □

Patrick Jordan *is* Commonweal*'s managing editor.*

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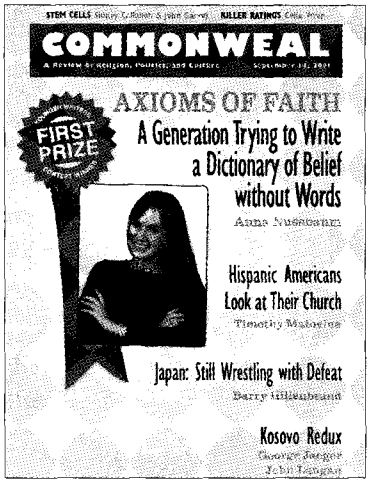
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